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ABSTRACT

In November 1980, the National Institute of Education (NIE) sponsored a roundtable on Issues in Urban Reading, the proceedings and recommendations of which are included in this paper and focused on two major questions: What is contributing to the drop in reading scores during the elementary and middle school years? and What are the skills and characteristics black children bring to the classroom? Following a foreword, the paper first presents the roundtable agenda, and a summary of the proceedings. The major portion of the report contains the papers presented by participants of the conference on the following seven topics: (1) issues on urban reading: a sociolinguistic perspective, (2) the competency based approach for urban children, (3) context and ethnography of urban reading programs, (4) learning theory and the reading problems of urban black children, (5) issues in urban reading: expanding the current NIE agenda, (6) research recommendations for an urban reading study, and (7) reading achievement and the social-cultural frame of reference of Afro-American children. (HTH)

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FINAL REPORT

NIE ROUNDTABLE ON URBAN READING

Prepared by: PSI Associates, Inc.
1900 L Street, N. W.
Suite #301
Washington, D.C. 20036

Prepared for: Dr. John W. Chambers
Reading and Language Studies
Division
National Institute of Education
Washington, D.C.

January 31, 1981

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FOREWORD

On November 19 and 20, 1980, the National Institute for Education (NIE) sponsored a Roundtable on Issues in Urban Reading. The roundtable was planned by PSI Associates, Inc., a professional firm specializing in educational research, psychological services, and staff development training. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Elizabeth A. Abramowitz, President of PSI.

The purpose of the meeting was twofold: first, to bring together a multi-disciplinary group of reading experts to identify the major research issues in urban reading; second, to provide input to NIE's five-year research agenda in urban reading by recommending basic and applied research topics that would address the issues identified.

The focus of the discussion and recommendations centered on two major issues identified by NIE:

- What is contributing to the drop in reading scores during the elementary and middle school years? What alternative research strategies might address this concern?
- What are the skills and characteristics black children bring to the classroom? How can these be used to improve reading development and maintenance through the middle school years?

In addition to responding to the above questions, each participant presented an abstract of the paper prepared for the roundtable. The participants represented a wide range of disciplines and areas of expertise and included the following individuals:

Dr. Wade Boykin
Department of Psychology
Howard University

Dr. Fay Vaughn-Cooke
Center for Applied Linguistics
Washington, D.C.

Dr. John Ogbu
Department of Educational Studies
University of Delaware

Dr. Dolores Straker
Educational Testing Service
Princeton, New Jersey

Dr. Helen Turner
Supervising Director of Reading
D.C. Public Schools

Dr. John W. Chambers
Reading and Language Studies Division
National Institute of Education

Dr. Elizabeth Abramowitz
President
PSI Associates, Inc.
Washington, D.C.

Ms. Marilyn Levie
Education Specialist
PSI Associates, Inc.

This final report of the Roundtable on Issues in Urban Reading contains a summary of the procedings including the participants' recommendations for basic and applied research. Also included are copies of the papers presented by the participants. [The appendix includes the transcript of the two-day session.]

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ROUNDTABLE ON URBAN READING

AGENDA

PSI Associates, Inc.
1900 L Street, N.W.
Suite 301
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 659-6436

Dr. Elizabeth A. Abramowitz
Presiding

Wednesday, November 19, 1980

9:00 - 9:30	Continental Breakfast
9:30 - 9:45	Introduction and Overview Dr. John W. Chambers, NIE
9:45 - 10:15	Review of Major Developments In Urban Reading Ms. Marilyn Levie, PSI Associates
10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	Presentation of Abstracts by Participants: Dr. John Ogbu
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Continuation of Presentations: Dr. Wade Boykin
2:00 - 2:15	Break
2:15 - 3:30	Continuation of Presenations: Dr. Fay Vaughn-Cooke
3:30 -4:00	Wrap-up and Summary

Thursday, November 20, 1980

9:00 - 9:30	Continental Breakfast
9:30 - 12:00	Continuation of Presentations: Dr. Helen Turner
12:00 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Continuation of Presentations: Dr. Dolores Straker
2:00 - 2:15	Break
2:15 - 3:15	Discussion by Participants of Major NIE Urban Reading Issues: 1. What is contributing to the drop in reading scores during the elementary and middle school years? What alternative strategies might address this concern? 2. What are the skills and characteristics black children bring to the classroom? How can these be used to improve reading development and maintenance through the middle school years?
3:15 - 3:45	Recommendations by Participants for NIE Research Focus and Suggested Methodologies
3:45 - 4:00	Closing Remarks Dr. John W. Chambers, NIE

SUMMARY OF PROCEDINGS

NOVEMBER 19, 1980 MORNING SESSION

OPENING REMARKS BY DR. ABRAMOWITZ

The meeting was opened by Dr. Elizabeth Abramowitz, President of PSI Associates, Inc.

The purpose of the meeting is to react to and add items to the NIE agenda for research in urban reading.

Two questions will be addressed:

1. What is contributing to the drop in reading scores during the middle and elementary school years? What alernative strategies might address this concern?

2. What are the skills and characteristics black children bring to the classroom? How can these be used to improve reading development and maintenance through the middle school years?

In addition to answering these questions, each participant will present an overview of their paper, followed by questions and discussion.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS BY DR. CHAMBERS

An overview of the meeting's purpose was provided by Dr. John Chambers, National Institute of Education.

Much of NIE research in the past has not adequately addressed the education of minority children. The purpose of the meeting is to generate input from you, (people sensitive to the needs of black children) to improve reading instruction for minority children in urban schools. The primary concern is improving student outcomes. i.e. reading ability.

The question to be addressed at this meeting is, what type of research questions and issues should NIE support, what should NIE's agenda be? our emphasis should be on a holistic approach to reading; an interdisciplinary approach.

Concensus at this meeting is not important; diverse opinions are welcomed.

OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE BY MARILYN LEVIE

Ar overview of the literature and NIE research agenda was provided by Marilyn Levie, PSI Associates, Inc.

After reviewing the NIE research agenda and conducting a literature review, four topics were identified by PSI as worthy of further research. These topics focus on practical application within classrooms:

1. Teaching reading or English across the curriculum; should there be a school language/literacy policy? what should its focus be; correct use of grammar or expansion of students' language abilities?

2. What are the ego needs of older readers (4-9th graders) how does this affect motivation, teacher style, learning modalities etc.

3. To what extent is research in urban reading focusing on how students acquire specific comprehension skills: concept formation, critical thinking and problem solving; how are these skills taught; what strategies for teaching them can be developed?

4. What is the future of advanced technology in teaching reading? how cost effective is it? what strategies work? what is the role of the teacher in using and adapting advanced technology for classroom use?

The NIE Research Agenda Focuses on the Following:

"To begin investigating developmental and cultural differences that influence learning to read. Such investigations will further advance our theoretical understanding of the reading process. In addition to providing insights relevant to instructional practice"

- To improve reading content
- Improve classroom interaction
- Focus on comprehension skills, oral language, view reading as a constructive process.
- Examine the interactive nature of reading; higher order thinking processes.

"CONTEXT AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF
URBAN READING PROBLEMS"

The first paper was presented by Dr. John Ogbu, University of Delaware.

MAJOR POINTS:

Many current theories neglect the context of what is going on in classrooms-- between students and teachers, between students and materials. These studies take a micro-level approach to the problem. The focus is too narrow.

Stratification of groups, rather than race is the issue. Racial stratification leads to difficulty in education in general.

Blacks do not blame their unemployment problems, social and housing problems or inferior education on personal inadequacies; they blame it on the system. This represents a collective orientation.

Part of the problem with regard to school performance and reading has to do with the nature of the status mobility system among blacks; the relationship between this system and schooling. Several factors contribute to the problem:

- inferior education
- personal conflict and mistrust or distrust between blacks and the schools
- the effect of job ceiling on motivation
- the effect of job ceiling on people's ability or development of strong academic orientation
- survival strategies developed by blacks and their relationship to the demands of the school system.

Recommendations:

1. Focus on changing the schools
2. Find out what black children are bringing to school and how we can capitalize and use that for classroom teaching and success.
3. In examining the factors that influence the reading achievement of black children in urban schools, researchers must go into the community to really assess what is going on and what factors exist.

DISCUSSION OF DR. OGBU'S PAPER:

The focus of the discussion was on the interface between home and school.

John O: The relationship between home and school and the involvement of parents and student achievement needs to be looked at further. In many cultures families are not involved.

Wayde: Investigate further parents' sense of efficacy about impacting upon the schooling process.

Fay: Look at the type of communication that occurs between parents and the school, e.g. at PTA meetings.

Beth: Is there really a relationship between contact hours parents have with the school and student reading achievement? How much of this is myth and how much is backed up by the research?

Marilyn: To what extent do schools really encourage parental involvement and make choices available to parents for participation that is realistic?

John C: To what extent do parents as models, reflect the actualization of those aspirations (for educational success) in their own lives?

NOVEMBER 19, 1980 P.M. SESSION

"READING ACHIEVEMENT AND
THE SOCIAL-CULTURAL FRAME OF REFERENCE
OF AFRO-AMERICAN CHILDREN"

The second paper was presented by Dr. Wade Boykin, Howard University.

MAJOR POINTS:

There are serious problems with the "linguistic-deficiency" approach to explaining why black children have trouble with reading. There are two perspecitves that provide alternatives to the linguistic-deficiency approach:

- Cultural-difference approach
- Social-Cultural perspective

The cultural-difference approach takes into account what black children bring to school; the structure of their language and applying it to the school setting rather than saying it is a "deficient" language.

There has been much criticism of these two approaches, but they do have considerable value. However, these two approaches can be fused, incorporating the strenghts of both.

The current approach of viewing the reading problem in terms of what is involved in the reading process and breaking it down to see where the problem really lies should be given up. Instead, a more wholistic approach should be examined; look at the social-cultural transactional agenda of teachers, of students and of students and peers.

Rather than viewing the reading problem microscopically, (analyzing each component and looking for the place at which it breaks down), view the problem holistically. Look at the social-cultural context of reading and the interaction within schools and classrooms.

Reading is not a natural process. It is a communication process that pales in comparison to conversational communication.

We should not overemphasize the cognitive components of reading, but give more priority to task involvement, task persistance and task interest in the reading process.

A discernable black cultural experience does exist. It is rich and varied and not monolithic. The failure to acknowledge the existence of a cultural frame of reference of Afro-American children gets us into trouble when examining the broader schooling context. Children come to school eager to learn, but their own stylistic agenda is not respected by teachers.

School serves two functions; socialization as well as cognitive. However, devoting too much time to making children conform to behavioral expectations often takes away from academic learning.

Recommendations:

1. De-emphasize the information processing and cognitive approaches (to the reading problem) and place greater emphasis on motivational issues involved in the reading process, i.e. task involvement, task persistance and task interest.
2. Develop strategies for fostering these motivational factors.
3. The elements of the black cultural experience must be brought into the reading context in order to impact on student motivation and achievement.

DISCUSSION OF DR. BOYKIN'S PAPER:

The discussion focused on a holistic approach to the reading problem.

Beth: Wade's approach is holistic. You deal with the whole child. What are the essential ingredients of any methodology appropriate for looking at urban reading, considering the issue of cultural dynamism?

Wade: First, the right questions must be asked. Second, the testing structure needs to be examined, Rather than faulting the kid when he doesn't display competencies on the test, change the context until you achieve the desired outcome.

John O: We ought to think about strategies that will address these problems so that future generations of black children will not go through the same (remedial) process.

"THE DIALECT INTERFERENCE HYPOTHESIS"

The third paper was presented by Dr. Fay Vaughn-Cooke, Center for Applied Linguistics.

MAJOR POINTS:

Proponents of the dialect interference hypothesis never took the time to demonstrate, empirically, that speaking black English interfered significantly with learning to read standard English. Latter experimental studies either found no, or extremely thin support for the hypothesis. The variation studies view black English not as a static system, but rather as a dynamic system.

Many of the hypotheses underlying the dialect interference theory have not been supported by subsequent research and are false.

The use of dialect readers constitutes an unnecessary step in teaching black children to read. Many black English speakers do have knowledge of production or comprehension of equivalent standard English variants.

The connection between speaking standard English and learning to read is a result of the dialect interference hypothesis. Because many of the underlying premises of the hypothesis are false, the issue of oral language should be studied independent of the reading problem.

Recommendations:

1. The dialect interference hypothesis should be abandoned. No further time should be wasted trying to test it. This will allow us to move on, with confidence, to another kind of approach to the urban reading problem; e.g. an ethnographic approach.

DISCUSSION OF DR. VAUGHN-COOKE'S PAPER:

The discussion focused on the use of dialect readers and the issue of diglossia.

Beth: One view has been to start by teaching standard English and then teaching reading, using oral speech as the mediator. Then teaching reading would be easier.

Fay: That approach underlies the dialect interference hypothesis and there is no basis for it.

Wade: Is there a corollation between speaking black dialect and reading scores?

Fay: Generally, persons who speak black English have low reading scores. The assumption of the dialect interference hypothesis has been that the oral language is the cause; the data do not support this.

Dolores: Dialect readers subscribe to the notion that language is static (which black Enlgish is not). Black English comes from an oral tradition; it is not expected to be written down.

John O: With regard to the notion of diglossia, to what extent (in this culture) is there agreement as to which language should be used in what context?

Dolores: I will be addressing that in my paper.

The first day of the meeting was adjourned by Dr. Abramowitz.

NOVEMBER 20, 1980 A.M. SESSION

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY DR. ABRAMOWITZ

The meeting was opened by Dr. Elizabeth Abramowitz, PSI Associates, Inc.

The session will end today by giving John Chambers immediate feedback on the NIE research agenda and some sense of what the group feels are the most important issues.

COMMENTS BY DR. CHAMBERS

While group consensus is not a goal, the papers reveal a good deal of consistency in approach. A lot of areas can be addressed simultaneously; we don't need to actually prioritize them.

"THE COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH:
AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH
FOR URBAN CHILDREN"

The fourth paper was presented by Dr. Helen W. Turner, Supervising Director of Reading, D.C. Public Schools.

MAJOR POINTS:

Looking at the student (re the reading problem) is important, but the instructional system must also be looked at; curriculum development and components of the reading curriculum.

Educational reform has not always taken (basic) research into account.

Many students exit the system not having learned logic, and reasoning. Many of the reading programs do not emphasize these components. Higher level thinking skills are necessary, but they are not being taught adequately.

The Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) provides teachers with concrete educational objectives, a hierarchy of skills to be taught as well as assessment for each objective. A companion to the CBC curriculum in the D.C. public schools is the student progress plan. Students must master a certain percentage of skills identified in the CBC curriculum for a grade level before being promoted to the next level.

Inservice training was provided to teachers, and school administrators in the use of the CBC guide (prior to its implementation.)

The CBC program addresses word perception, comprehension and study skills, starting at the elementary level.

Recommendations:

1. NIE should sponsor research that looks at more than just the student; it should focus on

instructional systems that meet the needs of black urban students.

2. The focus of research on instructional systems should look at curriculum development; what components are needed in curriculum; where the emphasis should be placed in the reading curriculum. Should we stress reasoning and logic in speaking and writing?
3. NIE should conduct an analysis of the Compentency Based approach to reading to see if it is a viable vehicle for urban students.
4. NIE should also focus on how current knowledge (from research) should influence teacher training. What are the competencies teachers need to teach reading to urban students?

DISCUSSION OF DR. TURNER'S PAPER:

The discussion focused on several issues, outlined below.

Higher Order Thinking

Fay: How are logic and reasoning evaluated?

Helen: There is no specific instrument we use, but in conversation with students it is apparent that their logic and reasoning is faulty.

Beth: It comes through in testing; black children in urban schools have difficulty with similarities, differences and classification. These skills are not inherent in the child; they must be taught. Children need practice in these skills. Its a curriculum problem.

John C: We need to look at what the child brings with him to school (re higher order thinking) and go from there.

Helen: We know that higher level thinking is important, test results show low scores in these areas for urban students. When we observe teachers, these skills are not being developed adequately; that's the problem.

Wade: How one defines the "deficiency" is important in terms of how the skills are then taught.

Beth: The problem is one of transfer of knowledge and learning. There are specific ways to teach these skills; there are rules to follow. The problem is its not being taught and students are not

given enough practice in school to learn them.

Marilyn: The CBC program addresses the problem of helping teachers see how children acquire knowledge.

Helen: The CBC program addresses this problem. We found that many teachers were uncomfortable with teaching some higher level skills; interpretive and critical thinking. The objectives and the hierarchy of skills in the CBC program addresses this problem.

Amount of time for students to "learn"

Beth: Does the CBC program define a certain amount of time per day that must be spent on specific skill areas?

Helen: No, but according to the program, teachers are encouraged to spend as much time as needed for the child to achieve a specific objective. The program also coordinates with Title I and ESA.

Evaluation

John C: Apart from evaluating the objectives, is there some other type of evaluation to get a better understanding of how the child is integrating the material?

Helen: Yes. In the guide there are three assessment tasks for each objective. Also there is a testing system which integrates all skills.

Relationship between "meaningfulness" and learning

John C. Research demonstrates there is a direct relationship between meaningfulness and forgetting.

Beth: The things that retard forgetting are drill and practice. Children need time to learn.

Helen: You have to be aware of student differences and compensate for them.

John O: We don't teach children how to learn; how to "go to school" and how to study. This is part of the problem.

Helen: The CBC program addresses this problem by providing a component on study skills, survival skills , organization and assignment skills.

Motivation

Wade: What type of strategy do you suggest for increasing student motivation (in the CBC program).

Helen: There is no new strategy. Rather, we emphasize what we already know about motivation and reinforce it with teachers; to be sure they do it.

Wade: Motivation is increased when the lesson is interesting, stimulating.

John O: A child doesn't learn something just because it is interesting; it may be related to career motivation.

Helen: The CBC program does have career centers and counselors. Children should see the relationship between what they are learning and the future.

Beth: It is hard to demonstrate the relationship between learning a skill and becoming a professional. I think it is an oversold notion that you have to have a career goal in order to motivate kids. Persistance at a task is the issue and having successful accomplishments.

Role of Parents

Beth: People who influence your educational decisions are not within the schools (alone). They come from the family or community.

John O: What if parents don't have the skills to guide their childrens' educational future?

Beth: The issue is that since the schools are doing an inadequate job in counseling, other social institutions need to do it.

Fay: What opportunities are parents providing for children to study at home?

John O: Black (parents) in general make little demands on their children in terms of investing time to study.

Beth: But that is not an irreversable condition. Parents can be encouraged to provide quiet time at home with no distractions, for children to study.

Fay: Its a complex issue, with regard to changing cultural patterns.

Beth: It also sets you up for possible failure; it involves taking risks(putting an emphasis on studying).

Helen: Finding a place to study is only part of the problem. Students need to learn how to study first.

NOVEMBER 20, 1980 P.M. SESSION

"A SOCIO-LINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE ON LANGUAGE AND READING"

The fifth paper was presented by Dr. Dolores Straker, Educational Testing Service.

MAJOR POINTS:

Language socialization is an area that needs to be explored; i.e. how do speakers of black English communicate with their children; how do children learn language with regard to age and sex roles? Specifically, what is the process of learning language? How do children learn to interact with familiar and strange adults? How and when do children learn when it is appropriate to use black English and standard English?

We know that diglossia exists. We need to understand how and and when children learn it and how this impacts on communication within the school setting.

Black English stems from an oral tradition. Information is stored orally, through sayings, etc. In a literal tradition, information is stored in books. In an oral tradition, the speaker embodies authority; in a literal tradition, information has authority because it is in a book. How do black children know what information is imparted to them has authority? They are operating in two traditions at once. There are particular strategies for communicating information inherent in the oral and literal traditions. But black children are in both. How does this impact on language socialization?

There is a need for more teaching strategies that are socio-lingusitically aware, like the learning experience and miscue-analysis approaches.

Three such approaches exist (Bridge Series, Cultural-Linguistic Approach and the Curriculum Research Project), but evaluation as to their effectiveness needs to be conducted.

Narrative plays a large part in black English. There are ritualized forms of narrative. Is there something different between the concept of narrative in the classroom and within black English? What are the expectations children have about what a narrative is? This again, is part of language socialization.

Recommendations:

1. Language socialization should be researched as a topic in its own right, not just as part of other research efforts in reading and linguistics. How does one become an effective communicator? What makes communication appropriate?

2. In studying language socialization, a holistic approach should be used-- a methodology from sociology, anthropology and psychology. Address the issue that language mediates cognitive functioning.

3. There needs to be more evaluative research on teaching strategies that are socio-linguistically aware, and whether these approaches would be useful in language arts programs. e.g. the Bridge Series, Cultural-Linguistic Approach and the Curriculum Reserach Project.

DISCUSSION ON DR. STRAKER'S PAPER:

The discussion focused on several related issues, outlined below.

Use of Dialect Readers

Beth: Do you have to use mediating texts (dialect readers) to get children started in reading?

Dolores: No, but they can be used with older readers as a form of motivation.

Learning Theory and Learning Styles

Wade: Are you saying (Beth) that we already know all we need to and that the problem is one of implementation?

Beth: No, but we do know a lot. Its a learning problem and there is specific learning theory that holds true for all kids. We don't have to start from scratch.

Wade: I'm not so sure that these learning theories have the universal application (you are suggesting.)

Beth: Motivating kids and being sensitive to their needs doesn't detract from what we know about learning theory.

John O: Are there learning styles?

Beth/
Marilyn: Yes, but not being used in the classroom. We have more information than we are applying in the classroom.

Evaluation of Theories

Fay: Maybe we need to go back and reexamine some theories to strengthen them and develop a transition from theory to application. NIE's five-year plan has merit; it provides time to find out what is needed.

Use of Standard English

John O: What language should be used in the classroom?

Dolores: Standard English should be used.

John O: Why don't children adhere to that?

Dolores: The research does not specifically address that. It may depend on the command a child has of standard and black English. Some children may be speaking their approximation of standard English, while the teacher feels they are still speaking black English.

NOVEMBER 20, 1980 P.M. SESSION AFTER BREAK

The following question on the agenda was posed to the group by Dr. Abramowitz:

"What is contributing to the drop in reading scores during the middle and elementary school years?" The second part of the question is "what alternative research strategies address this concern?"

Fay: Begin with the school. Look at the instructional program and the amount of time spent on task, student-teacher relationship, attitude toward the child's language and culture. Look at the principal's leadership ability. Look at the childrens' homes and parental attitudes toward acquisition of education and reinforcement at home.

In order to develop a research hypothesis, also view the literature on Child Development to see what important changes take place in children during the middle school years.

Helen: There are many (reading)skills that have to be reinforced in the middle grades. Teachers can't assume that all children have acquired them and then discontinue teaching them. Scores drop because students need to be taught these skills at this point and are not.

Research strategies should invovle on-site observation in classrooms to see what is actually being taught at these grades.

Dolores: The early grades focus too much on rote learning re comprehension. There's no transition to the fourth grade, for example. Students are "on their own" without the skills they need to achieve.

We also need to look at the language socialization process at this age; what is going on among peers that effects communication and language?

Wade: A better task analysis of the reading process is needed. Examine the information processing approach. Take into account social-cultural considerations. Look at how the child navigates through the social forces that confront him. View the instructional process.

John O: Look at the promotion system in the schools. If children are promoted regardless of what they have learned, then this contributes to the problem.

Marilyn: Develop strategies to address developmental differences in children. How do you deal with the child who is not ready yet for the next step in learning?

Beth: Parental and community support that is vocalized for competency based promotions doesn't hold up when it acutally happens. Parents will not tolerate

having their child held back. They won't buy into that solution for insuring that learning occurs in the schools.

John C: Are children getting enough early reading instruction (to keep reading scores up) and do the tests for reading really measure reading skills? These should be looked at more carefully.

Helen: Again, its a problem of reading skills not being taught and reinforced in the middle grades.

The second question from the agenda was then posed to the group:

"What are the skills and characteristics black children bring to the classroom? How can these be used to improve reading development and maintenance through the middle school years?"

Dolores: Children come to school understanding how to communicate and negotiate within his social framework, and he does this with language. I think he should know consciously that reading is a language based activity, that it is purposeful and functional and it is a social form of communication.

Helen: You first have to take into consideration that there are various types of black students that come into the classroom. At the very beginning (pre-school and kindergarten), students are very enthusiastic about the learning process. We need to build on this enthusiasm; in many instances we crush it.

We also need to look at the curriculum and see what we are requiring students to do when they first come to school (i.e. do they come with more skills than we realize and we ask them to slow down?) They come eager for readiness skills and we don't always build on that. We need to teach reading and writing and speaking together so they can see the relationship and why it is being taught. We have broken it down into such small pieces that they really don't see it.

Fay: Children bring language to school. They have acquired the fundamentals, the basic rules of language, although acquisition continues. The black child's language usage system may differ

from the system used in the school. This must be taken into consideration. Understanding this will prevent interpreting features of black English as reading errors.

Wade: We must take into account the repetoires children bring to school, e.g. movement. Look at the motivational synthesizing approach in incorporating characteristics that children bring (with strategies for teaching.)

John O: We need to look at what the schools demand of the child when he comes to school; what the child brings to school and the extent to which they are congruent or in conflict.

Marilyn: What children are bringing to school is effected by the increasing number of children who have attended pre-school programs. Teachers and parents have different expectations of what skills children actually have when they enter school. This in turn has implications for curriculum development, i.e. teachers need to assess the skills children actually bring with them and build on these skills.

John C: The question points to a very basic level of research that needs to be done. What are the competencies that children bring to school and how can the instructional system build on them? Further, how does the teacher respond to the variations among children in a class? To what extent are teachers adapting instruction to the needs of children; do they respect and value these differences or treat them as problems?

The last part of the meeting focused on the topics participants felt should be included in NIE's research agenda on urban reading. The following question was posed to the group:

> "Identify the major issues in urban reading, i.e. research issues that NIE should address."

John O:
1. What social/cultural forces reinforce or deter the acquisition of reading skills?
2. What practices within schools promote or inhibit the acquisition of reading skills?

Wade:
1. What are the incidents/variety and nature of the social/cultural manifestations of black children as defined in their terms?

2. What are the contexts that can be employed to facilitate motivation and academic task performance of black children, considering their social/cultural manifestations?

Dolores: 1. What are the processes of language socialization that impact on childrens' reading and language skills?

2. What are the most useful instructional techniques, based on the language socialization framework?

Beth: 1. What is the relationship between oral language and reading?

John C: 1. How can you institutionalize innovative reading programs?

Marilyn: 1. What are the institutional factors that facilitate or inhibit the success of innovative reading programs within the school system? What strategies would address both barriers and supportive techniques?

Helen: 1. What impact will the Competency Based Curriculum concept have on reading achievement?

2. What should be the basic components of an effective reading curriculum for urban youth?

3. What teacher competencies seem to have greater impact on the reading achievement of urban youth?

Fay: 1. What factors in the home environment affect positively, or negatively, the acquisition of reading skills?

2. Given that parents and teachers want children to exhibit certain oral language skills, i.e. standard English, what specific programs should be developed and how should they be made an official part of the curriculum?

The meeting was adjourned by Dr. Abramowitz and the participants were thanked for their participation.

ISSUES IN URBAN READING:
A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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by

Dolores Straker

Educational Testing Service

Princeton, New Jersey 08540

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ABSTRACT

ISSUES IN URBAN READING: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Dolores Straker

Despite the persistent attempts of compensatory education programs to address the reading problem minority students in urban settings face, the problem continues to exist. One aspect of this problem has to do with language diversity and its relation to reading. In the recent Ann Arbor court case it was determined that the language (Black English) that the plaintiff children spoke was not itself a barrier to their learning to read, rather it was the teachers' attitudes towards the children's use of that language that provided a barrier to education and specifically reading instruction. The mandate to the school board to develop a plan to take into account the children's home language patterns in reading instruction posed a problem not only for the Ann Arbor school administration, but for researchers, consultants, and other school districts facing similar problems. For while there are a number of studies that provide a great deal of basic information on the structure of Black English (BE), how it may have developed, and who is likely to speak it, the knowledge needed to fully understand the process of language socialization in the BE speaking community and its implications for education is far from complete.

There are too few studies available to provide a broad picture of language socialization within the BE speaking community, and much of our current knowledge regarding language socialization is based on assumptions that we have made with respect to the findings of studies that were more concerned with describing language patterns and language use, rather than the process of learning these patterns.

Additionally, although there have been some attempts to develop instructional techniques for teaching BE speaking students, instructional research is seriously inadequate in its ability to determine how, and to what extent it may be feasible to use BE as an educational tool. Some instructional materials that demonstrate a sociolinguistic awareness and take into account BE speech patterns have been developed. However, what is needed at this point is evaluative research demonstrating the actual effects of these materials.

Increasing the knowledge we have about language socialization via studies that focus specifically on this process and studies replicating the findings we now have will help us to determine which aspects of language socialization are most significantly related to school experiences and instruction in reading and the language arts. This in turn will help us to develop instructional materials that recognize as well as take into account language diversity.

Despite the persistent attempts of compensatory education programs to address the reading problem minority students in urban settings face, the problem continues to exist. This has been documented in anecdotal statements and through a number of assessments that report either illiteracy rates among minority students or the reading performance among minority and non-minority students. One qualitative aspect of this problem that has recently received national attention is that of language diversity and its relation to reading. In the recent Ann Arbor court case it was determined that the language (Black English) that the plaintiff children spoke was not itself a barrier to their learning to read, but rather the teachers' attitudes towards the children's use of that language that provided a barrier to education and specifically reading instruction. The mandate to the school board to develop a plan to take into account the children's home language patterns in reading instruction posed a problem not only for the Ann Arbor school administration, but for researchers, consultants, and other school districts facing similar problems. For while there are a number of studies that provide a great deal of basic information on the structure of Black English (BE), how it may have developed, and who is likely to speak it, the knowledge needed to fully understand language socialization in the BE speaking community and its implications for education are far from complete. Additionally, although there have been some attempts to develop instructional techniques for teaching BE speaking students, instructional research is seriously lacking in determining precisely how, and to what extent it may be feasible to use

BE as an educational tool. If we are to fully understand the problem before us and how to address it, we must assess what we know about language diversity as it relates to educational instruction and specifically reading, and determine what we need to know.

Basic Research

During the 1960s and early 1970s basic research in the area of BE reflected the social concern with inequity and countered the notion that Blacks' speech was deficient with the notion that it was different (Stewart, 1964; Labov, 1968; Dillard, 1972). From the studies conducted during this period we were able to learn about (1) the possible origin and development of BE (Stewart, 1964; Dillard, 1972), (2) the structure of BE (Stewart, 1964; Labov, 1968; Fickett, 1970; Baratz, 1972; Dillard, 1972), (3) the various discourse styles used among BE speakers (Labov, 1968; Mitchell-Kernan, 1972; Abrahams, 1972; Smitherman, 1977), and (4) who is likely to speak BE (Stewart, 1964; Wolfram, 1969). From these studies we have also been able to extrapolate information that has to do with language socialization. The studies conducted by Abrahams, Labov, and Mitchell-Kernan indicate that there are situational variables that determine context appropriate language use, there is language behavior that is related to age and sex roles, and there are rather specific attitudes toward using language appropriately with respect to age, sex, and the components of the social situation including the interlocators, topic of conversation, and situational setting. Straker (1978) further documents how the components of the social situation influence whether BE or SE is used for conversation. Yet none of the above studies were conducted with the specific intention of learning about language socialization among BE speakers.

From Abrahams (1972) we are able to learn that BE reflects intragroup differences such as age grading and sex roles. Abrahams (1972) reports that the very young black child learns how to operate--walk, talk, and do a variety of tasks--from the older children around him. In this way he learns the communication system, including the "kid talk" variety of BE. At the age of nine or ten peer-grouping among males begins to be the most important feature of their social existence. It is at this point that they begin to become conscious of the range of available language varieties and the value of verbal adeptness. Since the reference group is that of the older adolescent, the younger boy begins to try out the language-behavior system of adolescence. Masculinity is increasingly associated with the ability to contend with both words and deeds. Older boys begin to introduce themselves into the ranks of street men and their style of life not only through their concern with their range of friendships, the virtues of toughness and adaptability, but also through the ability to effectively persuade and control, and most importantly for some, to exhibit one's verbal ability. For the male there appears to be a progression toward speaking different varieties, each of which is learned as a means of entering a new peer-group and contending with new social situations. Each stage calls for a mastery of a new code or codes, but also for the selective rejection of elements of the previous variety.

Abrahams (1972) also reports that there are differences in male talk and female talk in content and style of delivery. Men say that women always gossip and talk about the business of others, especially of men. They are always sweet-talking the men, taking them for what they are worth, and sweet-talking each other. Women say that men discuss the doing of

others, argue, sweet-talk women, or try to out hustle someone. The difference between men and women talking about the business of others is that men recognize their behavior as being as bad as that of women; yet, while gossip is considered reprehensible by both groups, because it is a deviation from an ideal, it is accepted as being very manly. Women must maintain respectibility and are so judged by other women and men. Abrahams thus suggests that peer influence is important in language socialization. However, additional studies are needed to corroborate his findings. Hall and Nagey (1979) have shown that the vocabulary used in non-school settings by the parents of Black and White children differed according to socioeconomic factors. Yet we need a better understanding of how BE speaking parents communicate with their children. How are children taught to interact with adults who are either strange or familiar? How are children taught to verbally demonstrate politeness and respect? Houston (1969), Labov, et al. (1968), and Straker (1978) have demonstrated that the use of BE and SE among BE speakers is situationally determined, and that very young children are able to alter their speech to accommodate the social situation. Additional studies are needed to demonstrate how this language behavior is learned.

Smitherman (1977) discusses four modes of Black discourse and a number of rhetorical qualities that may be applied to individual units of speech. The four discourse modes include (1) call and response, a spontaneous verbal and non-verbal interaction between speaker and listener in which all of the speaker's statements (calls) are punctuated by expressions (responses) from the listener; (2) signifying, the verbal art of insult in which a speaker humorously puts down, talks about--

signifies on--a listener; (3) tonal semantics, the use of vocal rhythm and inflection to convey meaning; and (4) narrative sequencing, the use of a special type of story-telling structure.

In addition to these special modes of discourse there are a variety of rhetorical qualities that can be found in any speaking context. These devices include the following:

Exaggerated language--the use of uncommon words and rarely used expressions.

Mimicry--the deliberate imitation of the speech and mannerisms of someone else to demonstrate authenticity, to ridicule or for rhetorical effect.

Proverbial statements--the use of familiar Black proverbs to succinctly illustrate a point and convey the sound of wisdom and power in doing so.

Spontaneity--the clever use of spur-of-the moment ideas that occur to the speaker.

Image making--the use of images, metaphors, and other kinds of imaginative language.

Indirection--the power of suggestion and innuendo.

Tonal semantics--words and phrases carefully chosen for sound effects.

Punning

Braggadocio

We need to understand when and how children learn these stylistic patterns.

An additional aspect of language socialization that requires further study has to do with attitudes toward language and how language is used. From the extant literature we have been able to conclude that within the BE speaking community there is an attitude that defines the contexts that are most appropriate for the use of BE and SE (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972; DeStefano, 1971; Hoover, 1978; Straker, 1978). The problem again is that the particular studies from which we have extrapolated our information have been either focused toward other research interests or are too few in number. Both studies specifically interested in attitudes (DeStefano and Hoover) need to be replicated, while additional studies measuring the correlation between language attitudes and actual language behavior need to be conducted.

One area of inquiry that has not received a great deal of attention has to do with oral and literate traditions. The Black community is an imbedded sub-culture (Hall & Freedle, 1975) and its styles reflect a mixture of group specific behavior as well as mainstream culture behavior. The language used by Blacks and the styles of speaking within the Black community can be traced to the African oral tradition (Smitherman, 1977). Yet Blacks are members of western culture, a highly literate tradition. How do BE speakers reconcile the differences associated with each tradition?

Olson (in press) suggests that there are several differences between oral and literate societies. Strategies of communication associated with oral traditions place emphasis on shared knowledge and the interpersonal relationship between communicator and audience. The literate tradition, on the other hand, builds on the use of words to convey information or

content suggesting that language is "autonomous"--words can carry meaning all by themselves (Tannen, 1980, in press). The oral tradition is generally associated with family and in-group while literate traditions are learned and passed on in the setting of school. On the other hand, oral and literate traditions share similarities with respect to their archival functions. Written texts and oral archival forms such as ritualized speech, are devices which separate speech from speaker and through this separation make words impersonal, objective, and above criticism. Both modes can serve as a means of preserving information across time, and serve the role of ultimate authority in matters of dispute by preserving what societies take to be "true" and "valid" knowledge. In the oral tradition this archival function is accompanied via information stored in the form of memorable, clear examples, pity sayings, ritualized speech and condensed symbols. In the literate tradition the archival function is accomplished in the written form of texts, tables and in the detailed, explicit expository prose of essays, encyclopedias, and textbooks.

Tannen (1980) suggests that these strategies associated with oral or literate language are not linked to orality or literacy per se, but are found in both spoken and written discourse. Strategies that are associated with literate tradition have been conventionalized in Western culture for use in many settings, written and oral. Moreover Olson reports that children entering school have had exclusive exposure to the oral tradition in that language acquisition involves learning the illocutionary, pragmatic force of utterances before learning the propositional context. Schooling, particularly learning to read, is the critical process in the transformation of children's language from utterance to text.

Apparently there are inherent differences between oral and literate traditions; and as Tannen suggests, western culture uses literate conventions in a variety of written and oral settings. Additionally, children, upon entering the educational setting, are most familiar with the oral tradition. We may assume that many children just entering school will be exposed to the many literate conventions that have been adapted for use orally. BE speaking children, on the other hand, participate in an oral tradition, but its conventions may not necessarily match the literate conventions that have been adapted for oral use nor those that children may be asked to master in the educational setting. What influence, then, will these factors have on the BE speaking child with regard to language acquisition, language socialization, and learning to read, once the child has entered the educational setting?

We know a great deal about the structure and rhetorical modes of BE, and who is likely to speak it. We know something of the attitudes BE speakers have toward language use and the situational variables that correlate with language use. It appears, however, that there are too few studies available to provide a broad picture of language socialization within the BE speaking community, and that much of our current knowledge regarding language socialization is based on assumptions that he have made with respect to the findings that were more concerned with describing language patterns and language use, rather than the process of learning these patterns. We need to broaden our knowledge in this area by investigating the process of language socialization among BE speaking children and by conducting additional studies to corroborate some of the information we currently

have. Above all we need a better understanding of what each aspect of language socialization implies for educational practices, specifically in the areas of reading and language arts.

Much of what we know about BE has come out of the newly emerging interdisciplinary field of sociolinguistics, whose developmental nature requires that topics, concepts, and methods be borrowed from linguistics and from the sciences of social behavior. One perspective that might allow us further insight into the questions being raised regarding language socialization is Fishman's notion of the sociology of language. Fishman (1968) suggests that society is broader than language and therefore provides the context in which all language behavior must ultimately be viewed.

> The sociology of language inquires into the co-variation of diversity and of pattern in both society and language. Since languages normally function in a social matrix and since societies depend heavily on language as a medium (if not as a symbol) of interaction it is certainly appropriate to expect that their observable manifestations, language behavior and social behavior, will be appreciably related in many lawful ways. Some of the very designations of language variants carry social implications (e.g., formality levels, regional variants, social class variants, etc.). Some of the very designations of social groupings carry distinctive communicative implications (dyadic encounters, small group interactions, international conducts, etc.). Thus it may be that language and society not only reveal <u>lawful</u> co-variation but that each may provide <u>additional sight into the other</u>.

From this vantage point as well as from others perhaps we will be able to gain a more complete understanding of the social context of language learning and use in the BE speaking community.

Applied Research

An additional aspect of the reading problem urban minority children face has to do with applied research. There are instructional strategies

such as miscue analysis, the language experience approach, and direct instruction that have proven to be quite successful with minority students. However, a great deal of the research in this area has been poorly conducted and the findings provide no clear picture as to how the language the child brings to school can be used to assist him in his educational development.

The Ann Arbor decision indicates that the structural features of BE are not a barrier to BE speaking children learning to read, and linguists would agree. Yet the research studies conducted for the purpose of examining the use of dialect materials in reading instruction, at best, provide an unclear picture. These studies have demonstrated that (a) the grammatical mismatch between BE and SE is not a major cause of the poor reading achievement of Black children, (b) very often Black children do not recognize the dialect in print (Johnson & Simons, 1973), (c) Black children's comprehension of dialect materials is no better than their comprehension of SE materials (Hockman, 1973). Still other studies contradict many of these findings, reporting success with reading materials in dialect (Harber, 1977). The unifying factor relating these studies and causing one to feel uncomfortable about the reported findings is their concentration on the grammatical mismatch between BE and SE as the only element contributing to Black students' reading failure.

While we may assume that the specific phonological, and syntactic patterns of BE might be minimally problematic in language development and initial reading instruction, we know nothing of how the other aspects of oral discourse, as outlined by Smitherman, influence reading instruction at any level. Among participants in the BE tradition the narrative as a rhetorical mode has quite a significant role, as mentioned above. It is

used differently by teachers, men, and women to relate philosophies on life, teach lessons, and recount significant occurrences in one's life. In its most ritualized form it occurs as a "Toast" and Labov has analyzed its structure in the context of the "Danger of Death" stories. Yet we know little of BE speaking children's perceptions of what a narrative is, and if this perception corresponds to the notion of narrative emphasized in the school setting. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (1980) have suggested that there is a difference in the notion of story among minority and non-minority children. In a study of minority and non-minority children's story telling as related to reading it was shown that the non-minority children, when asked to relate a story, elaborated or embellished the topic. The minority children, in relating a story, elaborated it by including new details that seemed only tangentially related to the main idea. Gumperz refers to this as topic chaining as opposed to topic elaboration. We need to understand if there are any other rhetorical devices that might cause potential reading problems by being functionally similar in BE and SE, but structurally different.

Although the studies on the use of the dialect features provide an unclear picture as to the role these features can play in facilitating reading improvement, there are some instructional materials that show great promise. The Bridge Series, the Curriculum Research Project, and the Cultural Linguistic Approach are cases in point. The Bridge Series uses dialect readers and helps teachers to become aware enough of BE patterns so that they do not confuse the use of BE with other reading problems. It utilizes BE folktales and other stories printed in BE dialect. Because tapes and introductory notes are provided, the use of the dialect in this context does not appear awkward, unusual, or offensive. The Curriculum

Research Project, in its comparative approach to grammar, tries to make students more sociolinguistically aware of the relation between language use and context appropriate situations. It is a tool for teaching college English composition and its contrastive analysis approach to grammar makes it closest in theory to the oral language approaches that stress bidialectalism. It adds a new and positive dimension to this approach because it does not stress oral language skills but it does stress a sociolinguistic understanding of language use. The Oral Language sequence of the Cultural Linguistic Approach emphasizes the need to develop effective communicative strategies in its students and does so in a twofold manner: the child's culture and language are used as a base from which those concepts crucial for successful reading are introduced and reinforced. This method also provides a new dimension to the oral language development approach. The focus here is on developing the child's communication skills by expanding his awareness of and ability to express concepts. There is no stress, however, on changing the child's syntactic patterns.

What is needed at this point is evaluative research demonstrating the actual positive effects of these materials. These programs theoretically have potential in that they stress respect for the learner as having existing strengths and competencies. Each, in some manner, tries to build on these strengths and broaden these competencies. In so doing, these programs provide the students with positive learning contexts and emphasize for the instructional researcher how crucial it is to fully understand the importance of sociolinguistic awareness. If evaluative measures tell us these materials and programs are positively addressing the needs of BE speaking students, then they need to be expanded and the development of additional materials needs to be encouraged.

Increasing the knowledge we have about language socialization via studies that focus specifically on the process and studies that replicate the findings we now have will help us to determine which aspects of language socialization are most significantly related to school experiences and instruction in reading and the language arts. This in turn will help us to develop instructional materials that account for language diversity as well as recognize and build upon the learner's internalized strategies for using language to mediate learning.

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THE COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH:
AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH
FOR URBAN CHILDREN

THE COMPETENCY BASED APPROACH
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FOR URBAN CHILDREN

Helen W. Turner, Ed.D
Supervising Director
of Reading, Wash.; D.C.

Introduction

For more than a century American educators have been developing educational systems designed to meet the needs of the students for whom they have the responsibility of teaching.

During the early 1900's John Dewey emphasized a fundamental expression of values, relationships and processes flowing directly out of the American experience, which to many educators became known as "the Dewey philosophy." This philosophy played an important part in the changes that took place in the education of Americans. It helped in the development of curricula, the modification of many instructional materials and the development of classroom organizational patterns (Caswell and Foshay, 1950).

During the 1920's and the 1930's, criticism of the public schools led to many attempts at educational reforms. Those attempts failed, however, because too much emphasis was being placed on "child-centered education" and not enough on subject matter. Throughout the 1920's "freedom versus authority", and "child-centered education" were the slogans of the time. It was

realized too late that freedom for the child was important, but not at the expense of eliminating adult guidance(Hollis,1950).

The 1950's saw one of the largest educational reform movements in American history. This educational reform movement produced many changes: Team teaching,the Joplin plan,ability grouping, educational technology and individualized instruction. This movement failed to accomplish what many had hoped it would because the movement placed too much emphasis on subject matter and, for the most part, ignored the individual child. The greatest blunder of all was that educators failed to study the educational history, particularly the history of progressive education and its successes and failures. In essence, educators failed to realize that almost everything they were saying and trying, had in many instances been said and tried before (Caswell,1950).

During the 1960's and the 1970's,educational reforms such as the War on Poverty,initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson and the Title I Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 offered some relief to the problems of urban children.

During the late 1970's and the 1980's, mastery learning, continuous progress, competency testing and competency-based education appeared on the horizon. However,in too many instances, teaching was still predominately telling and questioning by the teacher with students responding one by one or occasionally in choir. Textbooks were still the instrument of learning and teaching was still devoted to details, most of it trival.

Even though reform efforts have been endless,problems such as inadequate financing, insufficient staffing, ineffective curricula,ineffective teaching and low reading scores continue to plague urban educators. These problems have continued because most educational reform efforts and research have tried to find causes and solutions to the reading problem of urban children by looking at some kind of deficit model-either the child or his environment instead of at other variables.However, recently, researchers have seen the need to look instead at the curriculum, teachers, materials that students are using and the teachers' lack of understanding and acceptance of the child's deficiencies. Consequently, research should be conducted which will answer questions such as the following:

1. Are there specific reading materials,programs and methods that are better for urban children?
2. Are teacher training institutions preparing teachers to teach urban students to read?
3. Without additional training can the same teachers and administrators who initiated unsuccessful programs in the past, design and implement new programs that will be successful with urban children?
4. What factors seem to influence learning relative to urban children?

5. Should persons outside the field of education design programs or dictate what should be used to educate urban children?
6. Where should the emphasis be placed in a reading curricula for urban children?
7. What are the competencies teachers need to teach reading to urban children?

Many of these questions have been studied in the past, and yet, many have ignored the findings when it comes to teaching urban children. For instance:

1. We know that students should be actively involved in their learning, yet the curricula requires just the opposite.
2. We know that students have various learning styles, yet we teach as if they all have the same.
3. We are aware of the principles of teaching and learning, yet much of the teaching ignores these principles.
4. Research has shown that teachers make the difference and not programs, yet we have not used this knowledge in many instances when designing an effective instructional program for urban children.

However, Washington, D.C. feels that it has found an approach that will teach urban children to read.

In 1975, Vincent Reed was appointed Acting Superintendent. He made a commitment to the implementation of effective instructional practices. Consequently, the Competency-based Curricula concept was instituted.

CBC was designed as a totally new program. Curriculum development for the CBC program began by focusing on the identification of skills areas and instructional goals. Behavioral objectives related to the skills areas and instructional goals were specified in each field. The behavioral objectives were developed into instructional triads, which was the basic instructional units in CBC. Each instructional triad contained a specific objective, a description of how the objective was to be achieved, and a way of confirming acquistion of the skill described in the objective.Student achievement is measured by three types of assessment procedures: norm-referenced-tests, criterion-referenced-tests, and assessment tasks within the curriculum.(Guines,1978).

As previously stated, the instructional triad is the basic instructional unit in the CBC approach. The instructional triad contains a specific objective, at least two learning activities, and at least three assessment tasks. These three components must be in performance agreement. This means that the performance specified in the objective must be the performance practiced during instructional activities and demonstrated on the assessment tasks.

Although the utilization of behavioral objectives, instructional activities, and assessment tasks is not, by itself, a new development in instruction, a description of each as developed by Washington,D.C. may serve to clarify the overall approach proposes to address the reading needs of urban children.

The behavioral objective has four characteristics: it identifies the audience- a description of the student for whom the instruction is intended; it specifies the behavior- the observable and measurable performance the learner is expected to exhibit; it establishes the condition-the materials, directions and restrictions provided for the learner at the time of assessment; and it defines the level of acceptable performance-the criterion by which the learner is to be evaluated.

To avoid ambiguity, a set of words were selected that described the type of performances frequently occuring in classroom behavior throughout all school grades and subjects. The set of words were; name, identify, state a rule,order, distinguish, construct,demonstrate,describe and apply a rule.

The behavioral objectives were organized into hierarchies of subordinate objectives under terminal objectives. Terminal behavioral objectives represent the most complex skills that the learner is to acquire and subordinate objectives are the

preliminary skills necessary for learning each terminal objective. Additionally, the hierarchy arranges the objectives to show dependency among them. The hierarchy provides the user with a learning path which includes three important kinds of information for planning instruction: the comparative learning difficulty of each objective, the dependency of mastery of one objective upon the mastery of others, the point at which students are to begin.

The CBC Reading Curriculum Guides (Volumes I& II) consist of objectives for grades pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. Objectives which identify the major skills to be acquired have been listed and sequenced hierarchically to establish continuous progress.

To accompany the behavioral objectives, instructional activities were developed. The instructional activities are in performance agreement with the objective, and involves at least two different sensory modalities. Although the description of the learning activities include suggestions for specific teaching strategies, the focus of this component is behavior to be exhibited by the learner rather than on the pedogogical style of the teacher.Thus, each activity is written in terms of student behavior.

The third part of the instructional triad are the assessment tasks. The assessment tasks provide the learner with

opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the specified performance both to the teacher and themselves.Each assessment task is in performance agreement with the objective. The condition or setting of each assessment task is different from those of the practice session in order to minimize the possibility that students will learn to perform through memory. The assessment tasks were constructed in several different ways depending on the performance specified in the objective. The skills in many objectives are assessed by means of pencil-and-paper items,whereas, some require a performance or demonstration on the part of the student.

Three consecutive successful demonstrations are considered to constitute mastery of an objective. The required level of performance is specified for each assessment task,permitting an objective determination of success or not yet proficient for each student(Ford,et al,1978).

The CBC Reading Curriculum Guides were used in 29 classrooms during the 1977-78 school year. These schools field-tested the materials. Additionally, outside evaluators reviewed and validated the materials during the 78-79 school year.

The 1978-79 school year was considered to be the first year of actual implementation of CBC. During this period,all teachers, irrespective of grade and content area received the

CBC Reading Curriculum Guides and extensive staff development relative to the utilization of the guides and how to use them with instructional materials such as basal readers.

Washington,D.C. Public School System has tried many reform efforts to raise the reading levels of its urban students. Many have produced results. However, presently, the D.C. System feels that it has found an approach that will significantly raise the reading levels.. The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills which was administered in the 1979-80 school year to students in grades three, six and nine,showed that the students were achieving better than in previous years. Thus, it is assumed that this trend will continue because the CBC approach has tried to address many variables that influence urban teaching. It provides the teacher with what should be taught,two ways to teach it with out destroying the teacher's creativity and three ways to assess what has been taught. It gives the student ample time to learn, to be aware of what he is learning and instant feedback. And most of all, parent and community involvement.

This paper concludes that some research still needs to focus on specific aspects of the urban child,his environment, language,etc. But, it stresses the need to focus on areas such as curriculum development, teacher competencies,teacher training and methods that are better for urban children as well

Until educators and researchers examine other factors which may be responsible for reading failures among urban children, urban children will continue to score below the national norm in reading.Thus, it is hoped that NIE will conduct the type of research that will be relevant and will dispell some of the ill-conceived notions about why black urban children can't read.

In closing, Hillway(1964), describes the situation in the following manner:

> Schools reflect the society they serve. Many of the failures ascribed to contemporary education are in fact failures of our society as a whole. A society that is indifferent to its heritage can not expect the schools to make good the difference. A society that slurs over fundamental principles and take refuge in the superficial and the ephemeral cannot demand that its schools instruct in abiding moral values. A society proudly preoccupied with its own material accomplishments and well being cannot fairly expect its schools to teach that the snug warmth of security is less meaningful than the bracing ventures of freedom.

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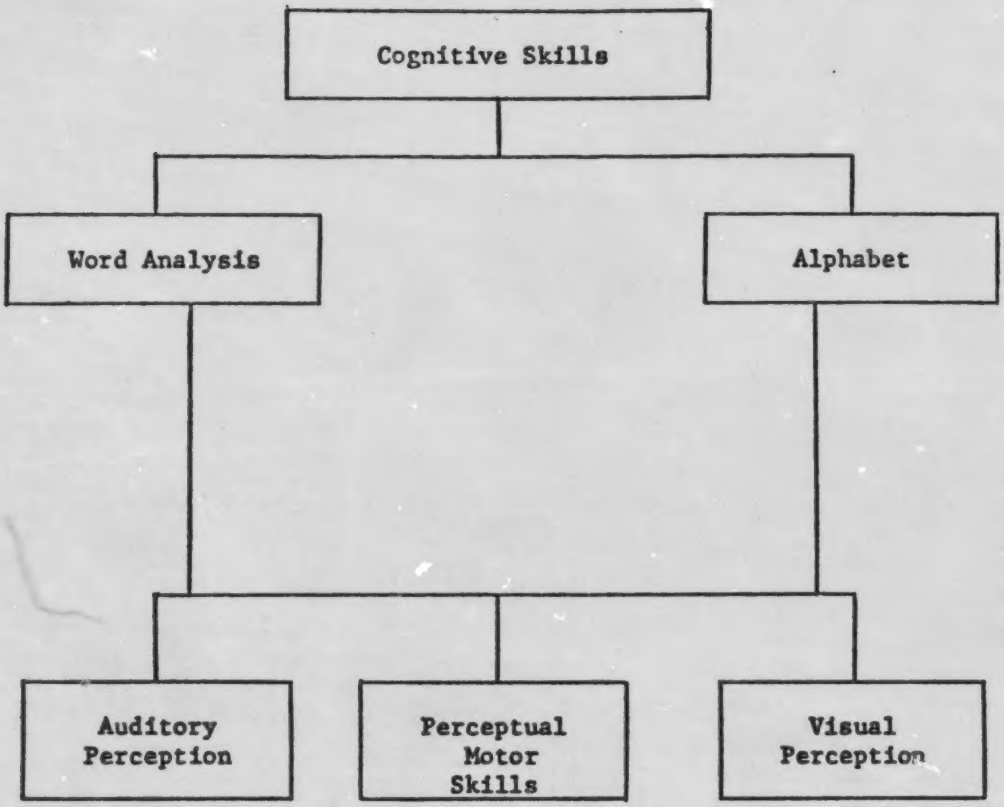
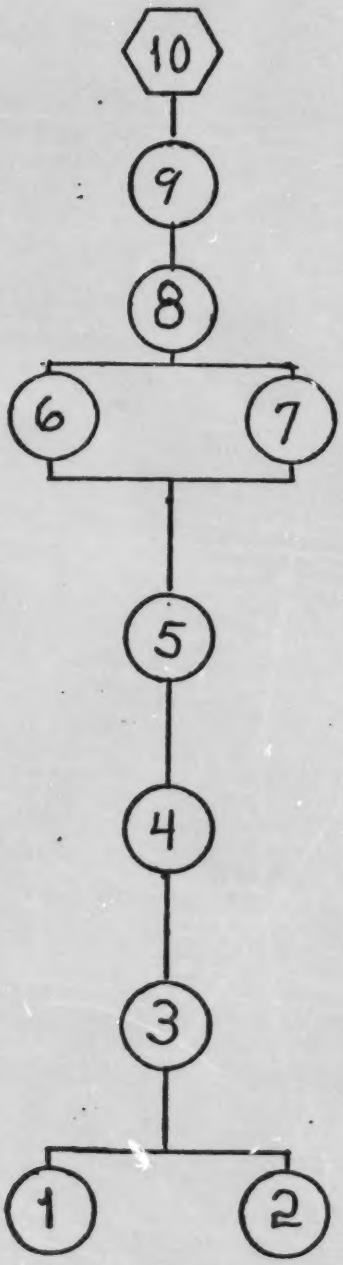
APPENDIX

READING READINESS TOPICAL HIERARCHY



HIERARCHY



READING READINESS/AUDITORY PERCEPTION

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

RR/AP-1 Given sounds of various familiar objects, the reading readiness student will name the object which is the source of the sound with no more than one error. (Name object which is source of sound).

RR/AP-2 Given familiar sounds in the student's environment, the reading readiness student will distinguish the sounds for quality (pleasant-unpleasant), intensity (soft-loud), pitch (high-low), and duration (long-short) without making more than two errors. (Distinguish quality, intensity, pitch and duration of sound)

RR/AP-3 Given a specific sound, the reading readiness student will identify the direction of its origin with 100 % accuracy. (Identify origin of sound)

RR/AP-4 Given a sequence of three sounds, the reading readiness student will demonstrate the ability to duplicate the sounds in sequence with 100% accuracy. (Order of sounds)

RR/AP-5 Given dictated words of one, two or three syllables the student will identify the number of syllables without making more than two errors. (Identify syllables)

RR/AP-6 Given the oral presentation of a familiar rhyme or jingle, the reading readiness student will name at least two rhyming words of the verses given after much repetition with 100 % accuracy. (Name rhyming words)

RR/AP-7 Given the oral presentation of an incomplete familiar rhyme or jingle, the reading readiness student will name the missing rhyming words with 100% accuracy. (Name missing rhyming words)

RR/AP-8 Given dictated pairs of words, some rhyming and some non-rhyming, the reading readiness student will distinguish the rhyming pairs with 100% accuracy. (Distinguish rhyming pairs)

HIERARCHY

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

RR/AP-9 Given the line of a jingle, the reading readiness student will orally construct a second rhyming line containing a least one rhyming word. (Construct a rhyming line)

RR/AP-10 Given a subject, title, or an object and directions, the reading readiness student will orally construct a simple rhyme or jingle containing at least two rhyming words. (Construct simple rhyme or jingle)

AREA: READING READINESS/AUDITORY PERCEPTION

OBJECTIVE: RR/AP-1

Given sounds of various familiar objects, the reading readiness student will name the object which is the source of the sound with no more than one error.

Informal Objective: To name the object which makes the sound

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY I

Materials: Common sounds of the environment: fire engine siren; passing cars; ticking clock; voices; bell ringing; footsteps; barking dogs, etc.

Procedure:

Inform the students that they will play a listening game. Ask students their ideas of the meaning of the word "listening". Next, ask other questions, such as: What parts of your body do you use to hear? (Ears) Ask the students to point to their ears. What does one hear when he listens? (Noises or Sounds) What makes noise or sound? (A thing or an object) Say to the students that it is true that objects can make sounds, and also, if one knows what the objects are called, he can name the objects when he hears the sounds.

Explain the listening game by saying that everyday there are many sounds around us of which we are often unaware, because we do not listen to them. And that most of these sounds are made by objects quite familiar to us. Now tell the students to listen to sounds and name the objects making the sounds.

Ask the students to sit quietly, close their eyes, listen carefully, and name any objects which they hear making sounds.

The students may name: fire engine, cars, clock, people talking, bell, people walking, dogs.

As the students name the objects, write them on the chalkboard. After the game, you may read the objects named.

Congratulate the students for listening well, remembering the sounds and the names of the objects which made the sounds.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY II

Materials: Large floor screen -- chairs

Game: "Name Your Classmate"

Procedure:

Ask the students to name their classmates as you point to them. Compliment the students for remembering the names of their classmates.

Next, ask if the students could name these classmates by hearing their voices instead of seeing them. Suggest that you play a game called "Name Your Classmate". Tell the students to play this game to find out how well they can listen and remember voices and students' names.

Ask a small group of three or four students to stand behind the floor screen and act as the "speakers. The remaining students may be seated facing the screen as the "listeners". The "speakers" will take turns saying in a normal tone of voice, "Hello, do you know who I am?" "Tell me my name." The "listener" who correctly names the "speakers" behind the screen as the "speaker" assumes the "speakers" place behind the screen. The game continues in this manner until everyone in the group has had at least one turn to act as "listener" and "speaker".

ASSESSMENT TASK I

Materials: Ruler, block, plastic straw, coin, pencil, metal saucer, low table or other flat surface.

Procedure:

Arrange the noise making objects on the table or other flat surface. Direct the students to manipulate the objects. Tell them to tap each one on the table and listen to the sounds they make.

Ask the students to name each object while tapping, in order to remember the objects and the sounds they make. Then let them be seated.

Next, have each student come up and face the other students in the group with his back to the table. Ask the student to listen for sounds and name the object making each sound. Have the student to pause after each tap, in order for the other student to name the noise making object. Allow each student in the group a turn.

The students may also take turns acting as "teacher" for the group.

Vary the game by using the class percussion instruments.

ASSESSMENT TASK II

Materials: Suggested disc or tape recordings: Farm animal sounds, City sounds, Students' voices, Kitchen sounds
A sequenced listing of sounds of each recording
Disc or tape recorder
one set of earphones

Procedure:

Set up the listening station. Seat the student and equip him with earphones. Tell him that you will play recorded sounds of farm animals.

Ask the student to listen carefully and name the animal making each sound. You may use your sequenced list of farm animals to check the accuracy of the student's responses. The other recordings may be used in the same manner used with farm animals.

ASSESSMENT TASK III

Materials: Large rubber ball, rope, wagon, tricycle/big wheel, skate board

Game: "Guess My Toy"

Procedure:

This game may be played with six students in or out-of-doors on a hard surface. Have a student to volunteer to bounce a ball, jump rope, ride or pull a wagon, ride a tricycle/big wheel or a skate board. Blindfold a student. Ask the student to listen carefully in order to guess the toy which is being used. Ask the students with the toys to use them, in turn, in order that the students may name the toy that they hear. Rotate the toys among the group members and give each student a chance to be "it".

CONTEXT AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF URBAN READING PROBLEMS

(DRAFT--NOT FOR QUOTATION)

CONTEXT AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF URBAN READING PROBLEMS*

by

John U. Ogbu
Department of Anthropology
University of California
Berkeley

&

Department of Educational Studies
University of Delaware
Newark

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* Prepared for the National Institute of Education Roundtable Discussion on Urban Reading Research, November 19-20, 1980, Washington, D.C.

CONTEXT AND ETHNOGRAPHY OF URBAN READING PROBLEMS

by

John U. Ogbu

INTRODUCTION

The persistence of gaps in mean academic performance in general and in reading in particular between black and white children in the United States is well documented. These gaps exist at every socioeconomic level. They appear as early as the age of 4 and tend to widen in subsequent years. Furthermore, the gaps persist despite more than a decade of compensatory education, pre-school programs and other remedial efforts (Haskins 1980; see also Baughman 1971; Broman, Nichols and Kennedy 1975; Jensen 1969; Mayeske et al 1973).

Explanations of these gaps have centered on the role played by the language, communication and cultural backgrounds of ghetto children, as well as on the appropriateness of the theory and practice of teaching and learning reading in the public schools (see Baratz 1970; Bereiter 1965; Bereiter et al 1966; C. Deutsch 1964; M. Deutsch et al. 1967; Feagans 1980; Goodman 1965; Gumperz 1979; Jensen 1968; Labov 1972; Philips 1972; Simons 1976; Williams 1970). I have discussed elsewhere some of the difficulties with these explanations (Ogbu 1980a, 1980b, 1980c). For example, many of these explanations are put forward without the benefit of appropriate comparative data. There are other minority groups in the United States who, like ghetto blacks, have distinct language and communication styles, as well as distinct cultures; yet, they do relatively better in school than blacks. Furthermore, these explanations are based mostly on synchronic and micro-level studies of classrooms

and families, usually ignoring the broader structural and historical forces which may impinge on these settings and events within them. In addition, the remedial strategies the explanations have generated have not been particularly effective in solving the reading problems of ghetto children (Simons 1976).

Researchers' notion of the possible sources of the reading problems determines their methodological approach. Consequently most research on the reading problem has focused on studying the problem at the level of classroom or family: language and reading acquisition, language and reading production and reading comprehension, and communicative interactional styles. Even among anthropologists, the methodological contribution has not gone much beyond the employment of microethnography (Gumperz 1979 ; Erickson and Mohatt 1977); furthermore, when they examine the academic and reading problems of minorities, these anthropologists have tended to ask primarily transactional rather than structural and historical questions (Philips 1972).

We recognize that various micro-level studies have enriched our understanding of <u>how</u> ghetto children and similar subordinate group children fail. They describe some mechanisms by which the school failure and reading failure are achieved within a given classroom. This knowledge is quite useful in designing remedial programs for classroom use and in the preparation of ghetto teachers (Erickson 1978; Simons 1976). However, there are serious limitations with this level of research and ethnography. First, the approach is incapable of examining the possible structural and historical sources of the problem. Second, the findings of these studies while useful for remedial efforts cannot be easily

for preventive efforts so that subsequent cohorts of ghetto children would not require the remedial treatment (Ogbu 1980a, 1980b, 1980c). In the following sections we shall first suggest a broader definition of the context of the reading and other academic problems of ghetto children; then we shall briefly describe the type of ethnography we believe would be very useful in studying such a context.

THE CONTEXT OF GHETTO READING PROBLEMS

In our own work we have suggested that the reading and other academic problems of blacks may be a part of a collective adaptation to both historical and structural forces (Ogbu 1978a, 1978b). From this perspective we have also suggested that the status of black Americans is different from that of some other minority groups in the United States by designating blacks as a kind of castelike minority group, as distinct from autonomous and immigrant minorities. In addition, we have suggested that castelike minorities are to be distinguished from the lower class members of the dominant group (Ogbu 1980c).

A castelike minority is one incorporated into a society rather involuntarily and permanently and whose means of escape from enforced subordination is through "passing" or emigration--routes which are not always open. Black Americans, for example, were brought to America as slaves; they did not come by choice seeking social, political and economic benefits like some other non-white minorities. Membership in a castelike minority is acquired permanently at birth. And members of a castelike minority generally have limited access to the social goods of society by virtue of their group membership, rather than because they lack education or ability and

training. More specifically, castelike minority members face a job ceiling--that is, highly consist ent pressures and obstacles that selectively assign blacks and similar minorities to jobs at the lower level of status, power, dignity and income, while allowing whites to compete more easily for desirable jobs above that ceiling. We use the term castelike minority or castelike stratification as a methodological tool to emphasize the structural base of the history of black subordinate status. We do not mean to imply that black Americans are a caste group in the classical Indian Hindu sense.

The reading and other academic problems of castelike minorities do not necessarily arise from the same sources as those of other types of minorities. For example, even though both ghetto blacks and Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong may come to school characterized by their different language and communication backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds and different "cognitive maps" or "scripts" and face the same materials and instructional practices in the classroom, they do not necessarily experience the same outcomes for the two groups may not be treated alike and may not respond alike to similar treatment (Ogbu 1980d).

We have suggested, too, that castelike stratification differs from stratification by social class, so that one should not confuse the reading and other academic difficulties of blacks, including ghetto blacks, with those of the lower-class whites (Ogbu 1978a, 1978b, 1980e). For example, blacks but not lower-class whites, have traditionally faced a job ceiling and a residential segregation or ghettoization (Drake 1968). In the latter case, until recent decades even relatively well-to-do blacks who could afford and who wanted to buy or rent homes in better parts of the city or in the

better parts of the city or in the suburb were forced to share the ghetto with poorer blacks.

In addition to the job ceiling and enforced segregation, blacks and whites differ in cognitive orientation. In the United States, at least, there is neither a conscious feeling among white members of any social class "that they belong together in a corporate unity," nor that their common interests are different from those of other classes (Myrdal 1944). Even white lower-class Americans do not share a collective perception of their social and economic problems as resulting from oppression or "the system;" rather, they tend to blame their individual misfortunes and lack of education (see Sennet and Cobb 1972).

In contrast, blacks do not accept their social and economic difficulties as legitimate outcomes of their individual failures and misfortunes. They attribute them to racial barriers in employment, housing, education and other areas. Most black Americans share this orientation of "blaming the system" rather than themselves for failure to get ahead, a cognitive orientation which forms the basis of their collective struggle for equal job, educational and housing opportunities, i.e., their "civil rights" struggle.What distinguishes poor ghetto blacks from lower-class whites as well as from poor immigrants of any color is not their objective material condition--poverty, poor housing, poor schooling and the like -- but the way blacks perceive and interprete that condition. This differential perception and interpretation have far-reaching implications for black experiences in formal education.

It is our contention that in order to understand why black

children fail to learn to read as well as whites and why they have greater difficulties in school generally, we must consider the cummulative effects of generations of black experiences of the job ceiling and enforced ghettoization, the resulting cognitive orientation and perceptions as well as the coping mechanisms or lifestyles they have evolved under their circumstance.

In our attempt to understand the contributions of these factors to the reading and school failure problems, we are using the concept of status mobility system in our analysis. A status mobility system is the mode of self-betterment as perceived and utilized by members of a given society or social group and as perceived and imposed upon a subordinate group by the powers that be in a stratified society. Thus in a castelike society the status mobility system of a castelike minority group is likely to be different from that of the dominant group. In the case of black Americans their status mobility system, perhaps before the 1960s, was distinguished by the fact that (a) it provided access to fewer high-status jobs requiring good education because of a job ceiling, and (b) it embodied two sets of rules of behavior for achievement: one imposed by the dominant whites, namely, educational credentials, and the other, "survival strategies," evolved by blacks as an alternative means to achievement. The latter included "collective struggle" or civil rights activities, "uncle tomming" or clientship, and "hustling" and "pimping." Blacks of course, have employed these two sets of rules differently according to their particular circumstances.

The job ceiling against blacks has been raised since the mid-1960s for several reasons, through affirmative action and other programs (Wilson 1978, Burkey 1971). This in turn has altered some features of the traditional status mobility system for some

blacks (Ogbu 1974, 1978c). However, as far as poor ghetto blacks are concerned such changes as have occurred have not gone far enough or long enough or consistently enough to affect significantly their participation in the status mobility system.

Both childrearing and schooling in a castelike society reflect the differences in dominant- and minority-group status mobility systems. They are organized diferently to prepare children from each group to participate in their respective status mobility system. Consequently, we argue that a clue to the reading and other academic difficulties of blacks and similar castelike minorities lies in understanding the nature of their status mobility system and the role of schooling wihin it. We also hypothesize that partly because the status mobility system of ghetto blacks has access to few jobs requiring and rewarding good education and partly because that status mobility system embodies two sets of rules of behavior for achievement, ghetto children's schooling is characterized by the following factors which contribute to thir disproportionate academic failure: (a) inferior education; (b) disillusionment and lack of effort optimism arising from low educational payoffs due to a job ceiling; (c) a lack of strong academic orientation and related functional skills; (d) incongruence between demands of survival strategies and school requirements; and (e) conflict and distrust between blacks and the schools.

Inferior Education:

The history of inferior education for blacks is so well documented that this phenomenon need not occupy us here (see Bullock 1970; Bond 1966; Ogbu 1978a). In general, the kind of education that whites have considered appropriate for blacks has depended on the visibly inferior jobs blacks hold below the job ceiling and on white per-

ceptions of how blacks get ahead. When these change black education follows suit. We can conclude that historically, if blacks did not qualify for desirable jobs it was because their education was designed to disqualify them, rather than because they were incapable of qualifying for such jobs. Until perhaps the 1960s American society never seriously intended that blacks should achieve equal social and occupational status with whites through education.

Even now, "subtle mechanisms" continue to underscore the different futures facing ghetto black and suburban white graduates. One subtle mechanism now receiving increasing attention is the disproportionate labeling of black children as having "learning handicaps" and channelling them into special education which prepares them for inferior occupation. For example, in a recent court case brought by blacks against the San Francisco school district, evidence was presented showing that black children who made up only 31.1 per cent of the school district enrollment in 1976-77 constituted 53.8 percent of all children in the educable mentally retarded classes. In the same year, in 20 California school districts which enrolled 80 percent of all black children in the state's public schools, blacks comprised 27.5 percent of the school population but constituted 62 percent of the educable mentally retarded population. The judge in the case found against the San Francisco school district, noting that the disproportionate placement of blacks in the special education classes could not have been by chance. The figures for San Francisco are similar to those in other large American cities like Chicago and New York.

Black Responses:

It would appear from their long history of collective struggle

for equal education that blacks see formal education as a means of improving their social and occupational status. But their expectations have not been met partly because their education has not been designed to do this. Thus blacks appear to have responded to both inferior education and to the job ceiling in a number of ways that have actually tended to promote school failures and educational preparation for marginal economic participation. Among these responses are those discussed below. Additional effects of the job ceiling, as distinct from black responses, are also discussed.

(a) Conflict With Schools: Throughout the history of public school education in America blacks have perceived their exclusion and inferior education as designed to prevent them from qualifying for the more desirable jobs open to whites. Consequently, a significant part of their collective struggle has gone toward forcing whites and the schools to provide them with equal education.

Thus intially blacks "fought" against total exclusion from the public schools. Now for over one century they have been "fighting" against inferior education in segregated and in integrated schools. Where and when they attend segregated schools the latter are theoretically their schools, so that one might expect them to identify and work with such schools. But the identification and cooperation have usually been undermined by simultaneous perceptions of the segregated "black schools" as inferior to "white schools." These perceptions result in diverting attention and efforts toward integration and equalization of education. In this relationship there merges a general feeling that the public schools cannot be trusted to educate black children well because of their gross and subtle mechanisms of discrimination. These conflicts also force schools to deal with

blacks defensively, to resort to various forms of control, paternalism, or even to "contest," all of which divert efforts from the task of educating black children. It is reasonable to speculate that this relationship ridden with conflict and suspicion makes it more difficult for blacks to accept and internalize the goals, standards, and instructional objectives and approaches of the public schools, a situation which must contribute to the reading and educability problems of black children.

(b) Job Ceiling, Disillusionment and Lowered Academic Efforts: Ghetto children perceive their future opportunities as limited by the job ceiling and these perceptions influence their perceptions of and responses to schooling. For example, junior and senior high students we studied in Stockton, California, saw the local student body as academically stratified into above-average, average and below-average groups, with themselves (blacks and chicanos) falling into the average and below-average groups. These students explained that in order to be a part of the above-average group a student must have serious attitudes toward school and work hard in school. Local blacks and chicanos, they also explained, do not behave in this manner because they do not expect to get the same jobs and other educational benefits open to whites (Ogbu 1974).

Ghetto children learn about the job ceiling and other caste barriers partly from observing older members of their community and partly from unconscious teaching of their parents as well as from their own experiences as they get older. They live in a world in which they daily observe unemployed and underemployed adults as well as drug abuse, alcoholism and crime. Furthermore, although ghetto parents tell their children that it is important to get good education, they

also unknowingly subtly convey to them the idea that American society does not fully reward blacks for their educational efforts and accomplishments when they discuss their own employment experiences and frustrations due to the job ceiling, or the frustrations and experiences of relatives, friends, neighbors and other members of their community. With this shared cultural knowledge the children increasingly learn to "blame the system" like their parents. Eventually the children become disillusioned about their ability to succeed in adult life through educational credentials, and they begin to have doubts about the real values of schooling. As they get older and become more aware of the status mobility system of the ghetto they become even less and less interested in school, less serious about their school work and less willing to exert the efforts necessary to do well in school. And they rationalize their subsequent failures by blaming the system (Ogbu 1974:100; see also Frazier 1940; Schulz 1969).

(c) Job Ceiling, Development of Functional Skills and Academic/Reading Tradition: It is often overlooked that the type of skills, including reading and academic skills, members of a given culture develop, value and utilize or express is one functional in their life circumstance, i.e., one appropriate for a theoretical or practical activity that satisfies a cultural need or solves a cultural problem (Ogbu 1980c, 1980d). An activity that satisfies a cultural need (e.g., subsistence needs through employment) is likely to become invested with much effort and cultural value so that it eventually becomes a cultural tradition. Such an activity usually requires an appropriate set of skills--functional skills or instrumental competencies--which members of the culture also come to

value, strive to acquire, and teach their children. In other words, a culturally satisfying activity (e.g., reading proficiency) not only becomes traditional or cultural but also stimulates the development and transmission of appropriate functional skills. The opposite is that an activity which fails to satisfy a cultural need or solve a cultural problem will not become traditional or cultural and the associated functional skills will be weakly developed.

The way in which children do or do not develop an ability to keep a regular schedule provides a simple example. Learning about time schedule is not simply a matter of having a watch or clock. Children growing up in families with a generation or more of experience with regular jobs, observe people who instinctively cut up their time schedule and deadlines, and thus develop the acute sense of time they one day will need to keep their jobs. Children in a world like the ghetto where large numbers of people spend their time loitering on streetcorners because they lack regular jobs see far fewer of the people they live with performing on a regular schedule, and develop a more casual approach to time. Keeping a white middle-class regular or clock schedule is not a culturally satisfying activity for many in the ghetto and the functional skills associated with it are thereby affected.

The same reasoning holds probably for some other activities and their functional skills that "work" better for the white middle class than for ghetto blacks, such as <u>reading proficiency.</u> We may speculate that white parents encourage their children more to learn to read because in their own experiences <u>as a group,</u> proficiency in reading has traditionally led to good jobs and other

rewards in adult life. In other words, proficiency in reading is a functionally adaptive activity for whites and has thus become traditional or cultural. The situation has been historically quite different for blacks to whom society has offered far less incentive to acquire and express reading proficiency. With a long history of exclusion from jobs and other positions requiring and rewarding proficiency in reading and good education, ghetto blacks do not appear to have developed a strong reading and academic tradition and are consequently weak in the instrumental competencies or functional skills associated with these activities.

(d) Survival Strategies And School Requirements: Economic, social and political and other discriminations experienced by generations of adult blacks and similar minorities force them to develop alternative or survival strategies for coping with their situation and for self-advancement. These survival strategies become an integral part of ghetto culture and ghetto status mobility sytem. And they are learned normally and partly unconsciously by children from preschool years like these children learn other aspects of ghetto culture.

Some survival strategies like collective struggle or "civil rights" activities, teach ghetto children to "blame the system," including the schools, for their individual and group problems--to externalize the causes of their school problems. Other survival strategies like clientship or uncle tomming teach the children that one key to achievement or self-betterment in that part of the universe open to blacks is through white favoritism, not merit, and that the way to solicit that favoritism is by playing some version of the old "Uncle Tom" role, being compliant, dependent and

manipulative. Still other survival strategies like hustling and pimping teach ghetto children an inverted version of conventional work ethic and to view every social interaction, including classroom interaction, as a setting for interpersonal contest and exploitation (see Ogbu 1980e; Milner 1970;.Foster 1974).

We suggest that the survival strategies may contribute to the educability and reading problems of ghetto children in two ways. First, the necessity to teach and learn the survival strategies reduces the time and efforts ghetto blacks invest in teaching and learning skills relevant to school success. Second, the incongruence between the competencies for survival strategies and competencies required by the school may interfere with actual teaching and learning in the classroom.

Ghetto children generally begin to learn the survival strategies during preschool years, so that by the time they arrive at school the potential for learning (academic and reading) problems already exists. Preschool children do not, of course, know that they are learning attitudes and skills functional in survival strategies; nor do ghetto parents deliberately set out to teach their preschool and older children attitudes and skills required by the survival strategies. Nevertheless we specu late that preschool children begin to learn these aspects of their culture as they learn other aspects of ghetto culture before they are old enough to know what they are doing. And we have at least one ethnographic report (Young 1974) which suggests that low-income black parents use childrearing techniques which may encourage their children to develop the type of "contest" skills and other competencies associated with huslting strategy (see Ogbu 1980e). As the children get

As the children get older and become aware of the values of the survival strategies they probably consciously seek to acquire them. Thus Gordon (1965, cited in Pouissant and Atkins 1973) reports that children as young as nine in Harlem already know that hustling and pimping are essential survival strategies. Some studies report that elementary school children already manifest attitudes and behaviors associated with survival strategies (Perkins 1975; Silverstein and Krate 1975), and by adolescent many innner-city black youngsters have acquired personal attributes required by the survival strategies (Foster 1974; Perkins 1975). It is the influence of these survival strategies that may help to account for the low IQ scores and low academic and reading achievement scores of preschool, kindergarden and early elementary school children in the ghetto, children not old enough to understand the job ceiling and other barriers to adult opportunities. The perceptions of the job ceiling and other adult barriers in relation to the perceptions of schooling further add to the problems of older children.

Considering the above factors in the context of ghetto status mobility system--inferior education, disillusionment and lack of persevering efforts because of a job ceiling, the influence of the survival strategies, and the conflict and distrust between blacks and the schools--we conclude that the disproportionate school failure and reading failure of ghetto children are an adaptation: the school performance is just at a level appropriate to prepare ghetto children for inferior jobs and other positions traditionally open to ghetto adu lts. These jobs and positions neither require much education nor bring much rewards for educational efforts and accomplishments.

The contribution of inferior education to the adaptation is the most obvious because educational discrimination against blacks has been subject of many studies. It is also that part of the problem receiving most attention in terms of remedial efforts. What is relatively unrecognized and much less studied is the contribution of the job ceiling, the survival strategies and the conflict and distrust between blacks and the schools.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, ALTERNATIVE CULTURES & READING ACQUISITION

The analysis presented above seems to suggest that ghetto culture is different from the white middle-class culture upon which school activities (e.g., reading) are based. That is indeed the case. However, we quickly should add that the reading and other academic problems of ghetto children cannot be explained by the simple hypothesis of cultural discontinuity which seems to be currently popular. Cultural discontinuity hypothesis may satisfactorily explain the greater reading and school success of the white middle-class child as compared to the ghetto child by referring to the "fit" between what the white middle-class child learns in the home from the cradle and what he is taught in school. However, this hypothesis cannot explain satisfactorily the greater school success of the Oriental child as compared to the black child in the same school because there is also a discontinuity between the home culture of the Oriental child and the culture of the school. Nor can this hypothesis explain the disproportionate school failure of the Buraku outcaste in Japan who, in contrast, in the United States do as well as other Japanese Americans and white Americans.

A major point in our analysis above is that the castelike stratification in America has generated two different macro environments and two different cultural adaptations for white and black Americans. But that black cultural adaptation is not merely different from white cultural adaptation; it is in many respects an alternative to the white. In the past whites often monopolized certain strategies or activities for solving subsistence and other problems of living (c.f.,a job ceiling,etc.), forcing blacks to work out alternative strategies (e.g., survival strategies) which might take the form of opposite strategies--~~the~~ black way of solving the same problems as opposed to the white way. This is an entirely different situation than what obtains when immigrants come to the United States bringing with them cultural ways of solving similar problems of living which they developed without reference to the white American way. Failure to recognize the black adaptation as an alternative has led some researchers and policy makers to draw spurious analogies between schooling and reading, cognitive and other academic problems of blacks and those of non-Western peoples in Western-type schools and immigrants encountering American schools and test-taking situations (Gay and Cole 1967; Cole et al 1971; Gladwin 1970; Johnson 1947). The special educational problems of an alternative culture must be recognized if we want to understand why ghetto reading and other academic problems persist and if we want to develop strategies tht will attack the roots of the problem. The first step in reaching such a goal is to study these problems in their proper context--beyond the family and classroom.

TOWARD AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE CONTEXT OF GHETTO READING PROBLEMS

There are two points we would like to make in this section. First, because we have defined the context of the reading problems to lie beyond the classroom and the family, it is no longer adequate to rely on microethnography as the main research approach for understanding these problems. Although the classroom is "the scene of the battle" (Roberts 1971) where school and reading failures are "achieved" (McDermott 1974), the causes of the battle seem to us to lie far beyond the classroom and family settings in the historical and structural forces discussed previously. These important forces and their implications for reading competencies and efforts are not captured easily--if at all--by research designs which focus on home and classroom language and communication acquisition, production, and interactional styles. Granting that ghetto children come to school with their distinct dialect, communication style and cultural knowledge and values, micro-level studies, inclduing microethnographies will not tell us why ghetto children do not make the same degree of adaptation as do lower-class white children or as do immigrant minorities with their distinct language and communication styles, cultural knowledge and the like.

From our point of view, the study of the context of the reading problems which we have outlined is necessary and requires the kind of ethnographic approach which anthropologists have traditionally used in their study of various cultures and societies. And at the heart of this ethnographic method is participant-observation. Unfortunately, participant-observation is a concept very much

misunderstood in contemporary research in education. What educational researchers describe as ethnographic studies are often no more than observational studies, sometimes carried out in very precise manner. These observations may last a few hours, a day or two, a week or a month; or it may involve a periodic visit to a site for a brief time. Moreover, the observation is often focused on an event in isolation, such as teacher-pupil interaction during reading. This may be a good qualitative study but it is not an ethnographic study from the point of view of anthropology.

Participant-observation or ethnography has a special meaning in anthropology which in its contemporary practice is summarized as follows by our colleague, Gerald D. Berreman (1968:337):

> (Participant-observation) refers to the practice of living among the people one studies, coming to know them, their language and their lifeways through intense and nearly continuous interaction with them in their daily lives. This means that the ethnographer converses with the people he studies, works with them, attends their social and ritual functions, visits their homes, invites them to his home--that he is present with them in as many situations as possible, learning to know them in as many settings and moods as he can. Sometimes he interviews for specific kinds of data; always he is alert to whatever information may come his way, ready to follow up and understand any event or fact which is unanticipated or seemingly inexplicable. The methods by which he derives his data are often subtle and difficult to define.

The richness of this definition shows itself nowhere in many of the

published research in education which are said to be based on ethnography.

Whether we are studying the context of reading failures in the ghetto or the problem of ghetto school failure in general, the ethnographer needs to live with ghetto people for at least one year for several reasons. First, he needs to collect data on ghetto people's behaviors and events in tneir natural setting. Second, the ethnographer needs this long period of residence to establish the kind of rapport that would make it possible to collect certain information he would otherwise not be privileged to get. Third, the long period of residence helps to obtain more reliable information through repeated participation, observation, questioning, and gossips. Fourth, a long period of residence helps the ethnographer become fluent in the local dialect, including street talk. In our own research in Stockton, California, we lived in the community for 16 of the 20 months of our work and found this extended period to be particularly valuable. Most school ethnographers are, unfortunately, scheduled visitors or non-resident observers and participants of the community.

The ethnographer must become competent in the local black dialect and street talk to gain more trust, acceptance and rapport as well as to collect data coded in the local dialect. Some data are not easy to translate and must be learned by the ethnographer becoming socialized into local ghetto theory of speaking (Hymes 1971).

In order to collect valid and reliable data the ethnographer of the context of ghetto reading and other academic difficulties must strive to establish and maintain good rapport with various

groups involved in ghetto schooling throughout the research. This is not an easy task for most anthropologists anywhere and usually takes several months. Gaining an entry or an access to a ghetto population or any other population is just a first step. But the physical presence, permission to participate and observe are not very useful until one establishes a good rapport. To begin with, the ethnographer has to avoid being identified with a particular faction in the community or with some unpopular members of it. He must also strive to get along with nearly all groups. Then he must discover some members of the ghetto who are both knowledgeable and reliable informants with whom he can establish special relations and to whom he can return from time to time for more clarification of his findings.

How does the ethnographer go about establishing these relations? Traditionally anthropologists have relied on reciprocity as a tool to achieve this. In general, anthropologists feel a deep sense of obligation to return favors to those from whom they demand so much in terms of time and information. The anthropologist may reciprocate by providing his informants with material things, including money or by rendering services to them. But giving informants or local people material things like money is not the same thing as paying them. It is not the practice of the anthropologist to pay informatns. Eastablishing rapport in educational ethnography also requires reciprocity of the type traditionally practiced by the anthropologist. In Stockton, California, we spent the first three months of our research trying to gain acceptance in the community and its local schools. We did this by going to churches and neighborhood centers where we usually explained to people what we were doing. We rode bicycles and played with children

after school and on weekends; and we interacted with teachers and other school personnel in the school and at various community meetings. We did some volunteer work, including tutoring, baby-seating, taking people to hospitals or to do grocery and other shoppings. We invited people to dinner, preparing Nigerian meals or went to their homes to do the same. And because our notes were almost always more complete and we were regular in attendance we later literarilly became the secretary of some neighborhood organizations. Our aim was to establish the kind of rapport that would enable people to visit us without invitation and to enable us to visit them in the same manner. In addition, we developed special and close relationship with some informants, in some cases with entire families, with whom we consulted from time to time and with whom we reciprocated more often and in many ways.

Anthropologists think that an ethnographer should have certain attributes to be successful. This should also apply to an ethnographer of the context of reading and other academic problems in the ghetto. A few examples of these attributes will serve to illustrate the need. An ethnographer should have a sense of perspective, i.e., he should be able to distinguish the important from the trivial; maintain a somewhat objective and skeptical approach to his data; and he should have a sense of humor both to survive the difficult moments of an extended fieldwork and to establish rapport with informants. The ethnographer should have empathy, i.e., he should be able to experience the world of ghetto people as the people experience it. He should be able and willing to reciprocate (Berreman 1968: Fried 1970).

The fieldworker in the ghetto should have an ethnographic imagination, i.e. he should be able to seek and find interrelationships among his observed data, to see relationships between observed data and other facts and ideas with which he is familiar, to see their relevance and to weigh their importance. To be able to do this well, the ethnographer should have a reasonable theory of how American society "works" both in theory and in practice. He should also develop a similar understanding of the ghetto community and its relationship to the wider society.

The ethnographer in the ghetto as elsewhere should maintain a holistic view in his research. An ethnographic study is holistic in the sense that the ethnographer endeavors to show the inter-relationship between the institution or phenomenon he is studying and other institutions or phenomena in the community of the ghetto and the wider society; or, the relationship between the particular behavior he is studying and other aspects of the local culture.

Finally, although participant-observation is the principal technique of collecting data, methodological flexibility is a major feature of anthropological ethnography. The ethnographer should and can employ a host of other techniques, including life histories, interviews, questionnaires, projective tests, documentary study, videotaping and the like where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

In the past research on inner-city reading and other academic problems has tended to focus on events in the home and classroom. It has become clear that much more is involved. Of particular importance is the increasing recognition of the role of cultural

differences. Yet we argued in this paper that reading and school failure problems are endemic only to certain types of cultural differences or what we have called alternative cultures. We believe that there is a need for a new conceptual framework that would enable us to distinguish and describe those unique cultural situations in which these problems occur.

Traditional anthropological ethnography can contribute to our understanding of the wider context of these reading and academic problems. There is, consequently, there is a need to conduct several case studies in various ghetto communities and schools. Findings from these case studies will then provide us with the kind of data we need to be able to describe the context of the reading problems with confidence and to begin to device more realistic preventive as well as remedial strategies.

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LEARNING THEORY AND THE READING PROBLEMS OF URBAN BLACK CHILDREN

LEARNING THEORY AND THE READING PROBLEMS OF URBAN BLACK CHILDREN

Elizabeth A. Abramowitz, Ph.D.
President, PSI Associates, Inc.

Introduction

How one learns verbal and nonverbal material, and why one forgets this material have long been preoccupations of educational psychology for about 100 years. By reexamining these theories, we may be better able to predict and control the conditions of learning needed to improve reading in urban schools.

At the outset, it should be noted that black children are not homogeneous. There are significant differences in heredity and environment which affect not only reading, but also all predispositions to learning. Although we speak of the "black child", we must remain fully cognizant of the diversity within the black population. Race as a unifying trait is potent. However, other factors, such as mental and physical health, family income and structure, diet and housing conditions can also create equally significant differeces within the black child population.

The focus of this paper, as the title suggests, is not all black children. The paper, in keeping with the wishes of the National Institute on Education, is limited to black children in urban schools. Furthermore, within this cohort, the paper addresses under-achieving black children in public elementary and junior high schools. Thus, it is children for whom the

system of instruction has not worked, who are the special focus of this paper.

The author assumes that the black children discussed here are not severely retarded; do not have congenital birth defects, such as cerebal palsy; and have normal speech, vision, hearing, motility and capacity to learn. Thus, the causes of their under-achievement in reading are due to environmental factors, especially the conditions under which instruction was offered.

To this observer, the problems black children (and others) encounter in reading look like problems of retention, that is, the presence of forgetting. Under ideal circumstances, new materials are learned well enough to be retained over time by the learner; and therefore, are available for recall and later use in reading exercises.

Reading is made up of many separate cognitive skills. By looking at the most basic skills, we are better able to understand when and how children fail. At a minimum, reading requires visual memory, first for letters, and later for words. In pre-school and kindergarten classes, children are first presented with a letter of the alphabet. Next, the letter is taken away, and the child is asked either to point to the correct letter in a group of other letters, or to draw the letter from memory. (The former task is called a recognition task, and the latter is called a recall task.) Children who fail to master first these preliminary tasks cannot learn to read and understand the written word.

In its simplest form, failing to point to the correct letter is a failure of visual memory in normal children. Both

recall and recognition tasks require that the child first visually memorize the letter. Next, the child must be able to "call up" the mental image of the letter stored. And, last, the child must match the mental image of the letter with the actual letter embedded in a group of other letters in front of him (recognition), or with the drawing of the letter he has just produced (recall).

For nonreaders, regardless of race, the materials may not have been learned well enough to be retained, and recalled later. Considering that all school districts in this country teach reading, yet children fail to read on grade level, the necessary conditions for retention apparently have not been satisfied.

Educational psychology has over the past 100 years developed two theories of learning which explain and predict retention. Can the reading underachievement of black children in urban public schools be regarded as specific application of these theories?

Two Theories: Transfer and Interference

School learning is the result of the interaction of the cumulative experiences of the learner with the new material to be learned. A point often stressed when examining the functioning of black children in the classroom is the relevance of the new material to the non-school experiences of the students. Black children, like all other human beings, bring to bear on the classroom tasks, the sum total of their experiences, whether consciously or unconsciously. Sometimes that experience will facilitate new learning, and thus retention; other times, it will not.

New learning among older students becomes difficult in part because of the effect past experience has on the rate at which new learning can take place. This is easily recognized in teaching a foreign language. A high school teacher, for example, tries, sometimes in vain, to get the student to pronounce a foreign word without an American accent. The student dutifully repeats the correct pronunciation several times after the teacher. But, the next day, to the teacher's chagrin, the student returns spontaneously to the American pronunciation. In this very common problem, the past experience in American pronunciations interfered with learning the foreign pronunciation well enough to retain it over time.

The underlying variable is clearly similarity. That is, the degree of similarity between the skills and knowledge one brings to the classroom and the new material to be learned directly affect learning and retention.

Two separate but related theoretical developments explain and predict the influence of experience on learning; these are transfer and interference theories.

Transfer Theory

The transfer theories of both Thorndike and Judd predict that transfer will be the result of the degree of similarity between old and new learning. According to Thorndike's Theory of Identical Elements, a change in one mental function alters another only insofar as the two functions have elements in common. Early research aimed at determining the gross effects of practice with task upon acquisition of another task.

In 1901, Thorndike and Woodworth theorized that transfer was a function of identical elements of learning substance or teaching method. The amount of influence (transfer effect) which past experience will have on present learning varies with the degree of similarity between the two activities.

Studies on the influence of similarity between the original and the transfer tasks most often find that the number of identical elements influence transfer of learning. However, there is an important caveat. When the stimuli in the past situation are similiar to the stimuli in the present situation and the responses are identical, there is positive transfer from past to present learning. When the stimuli are similar but the responses are different, there is negative transfer leading to incorrect answers. Under these circumstances, past experience leads the student to the wrong answer, producing a negative effect on new learning.

Studies have also demonstrated that pre-experimental exercises, such as learning-to-learn and warm-up can enhance a transfer effect, because transfer is not necessarily dependent upon the specific similaries of the task, but rather upon its general characteristics.

Learning-to-learn and warm-up exercises increase time on task in specific ways, thus enabling students to produce transfer effects. Students most often intuitively seek ways to use past experience to increase present learning by finding points of similarity between what they already know and what they are being taught. In classrooms, children frequently achieve such insight and say, "Oh, this is just like..." or

"I see, I do this like I did the other one." College students and working adults do the same thing.

As the following chart demonstrates, old and new learning create different transfer effects, according to Transfer Theory. If the similarity is between the old and new stimulus situation, there is one effect. If it is between the old and new response situations, there is a different effect. As the chart points out, the most difficult learning situation is one in which the stimulus in the new learning is identical to that in the previously learned situation, and the old and new responses are different. Under these unfortunate circimstances, the student will almost always encounter confusion and require a great deal of time in order to learn the new material to a level of mastery.

Transfer Effects

Old and New Stimuli	Old and New Responses	Transfer Effect	Rate of Learning New Responses
Similar	Identical	Positive	Rapid
Identical	Similar	Positive	Rapid
Different	Identical	Positive	Rapid
Different	Different	Neutral	Average
Similar	Different	Negative	Slow

When black children fail to read or fully comprehend the written word, is there not a break down in postive transfer? Does the instructional program fail to provide sufficient opportunity and warm-up to facilitate positive transfer? Does the teacher fail to recognize the child's intuitive efforts to achieve postive transfer?

Interference Theory

Following the 1940s, the dominant learning theory was Interference Theory, which predicts and explains conditions of negative transfer. Research on Interference Theory, especially by Leo Postman, has defined two successful stages of learning:

- In the first stage, responses are learned, if not already in the learner's repetoire. The key is insuring that the material to be learned is already within the learner's repetoire. In young children, this means forming associations between successive letters until a meaningful whole word is perceived for words they have not seen before. In older children, it means stringing together a series of words into a whole new sentence for sentences they have not seen before.

- In the second stage, the responses are connected to appropriate stimuli. In young children, for example, this may involve associating the response word with a stimulus picture. In older children, it may mean associating a response sentence with a concept.

Reading, in particular, is a developmental process which fits within the framework of the two-stage process of Interference Theory. One must be able to produce the correct responses before being able to associate those responses with specific stimuli. Again, the familiar learning-to-learn and warm-up exercises provide time on task for students to learn similar responses before having to associate the actual responses with correct stimuli.

Interference Theory predicts a sequence of instructional activities for teaching reading which successful teachers do in fact follow. Such teachers provide opportunities for response learning, before associative learning. Such teachers know from their own experiences as educators that unless the students are able to perceive the differences within the response material,

they will not be able to form the correct associated meaning. Foreign language teachers, in particular, incorporate two-stage learning into their standard pedagogy: First, they familarize the students with the sight and sound of the new foreign words, Then, they ask the students to hook the words up to meaningful stimulus pictures or concepts.

According to Interference Theory, the level of performance in either Stage I or Stage 2 of learning is a function of the degree of interference of past learning with future learning to produce proactive inhibition, or of future learning with past learning to produce retroactive inhibition.

Retroactive Inhibition.

The basic assumption of Interference Theory is that forgetting is the result of one set of learning, which inhibits recall and retention of another set of learning. There is empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that past and present learning are two systems which compete with each other for dominance within the child. When the student must master different responses to identical stimuli, the newer, stronger, and more dominant response will intrude at recall of the older responses.

However, learning and retention are dynamic systems. Two competing response systems do not remain totally independent of each other, but rather blend into a single system over time, and eventually, weaken the earlier set of associations, in the case of retroactive inhibition. Psycholinguists, in particular, have recognized this blending of older nonstandard and

newer standard English patterns in black children. They have also observed the eventual weakening in the use of the nonstandard English forms over time under these circumstances.

English teachers also recognize this when teaching students to shift from simple and older sentence constructions to complex and newer forms. They observe and encourage the eventual weakening and disappearance of the older, simpler forms from essays.

In retroactive inhibition, the first learned material, such as nonstandard oral language is eventually forgotten and extinguished. Without some degree of relearning at home or school, or without the passage of time for spontaneous recovery, the first learned material is completely lost. For urban black children, retroactive inhibition predicts that without opportunities for relearning and practice at home or the playground, black children would totally replace nonstandard English with standard English over time. If this is true, what does it suggest about the impact of dialect readers in the classroom?

Proactive Inhibition.

Proactive inhibition is the other type of negative transfer addressed in Interference Theory. In proactive inhibition, previously learned responses have more habit strength than new responses. (In retroactive inhibition, the opposite is true.) In novel learning situations, the previously learned responses will be elicited. Thus, in the competition between old and new learning, old learning wins. This is a commonly observed pro-

blem in classrooms.

Proactive inhibition affects learning because learners require more time to learn new material in order to reduce forgetting. In order to win out over old habits, the new material must be over-learned. This requires time. Because recently learned material is easily forgotten over periods of time, proactive inhibiton affects retention. Again, only by over-learning new material will it be retained over time when proactive inhibition is present, according to theory.

The most consistent finding from research on proactive inhibition is that the amount of time needed to master new material is directly related to the level of learning of the original material. Stated more elegantly as the Muller-Schuman Law:

> When any two items as A and B, have been associated, it is more difficult to form an assocation between either and a third item K (McGeoch, 1942).

Teachers frequently observe proactive inhibtion in the classroom, when trying repeatedly without noticeable success, to correct a student by teaching a new response to old stimulus. Teachers are depressingly aware of what they regard as the inordinate amount of time needed to master new material, when the previously learned material was well learned. They also are painfully aware of how quickly the students forget the new material inspite of the time spent on it in class.

Some of the reading problems of black children, especially older students, appear to be specific problems of proactive inhibition. Proactive inhibition has been demonstrated to exist in connected discourse, as well as in simpler verbal learning, such as

sight vocabulary. Among older black students, the reading problems appear to persist inspite of trips to the reading resource teachers, because of the interference of previously learned responses with habit strength (such as oral language patterns) into the new learning situation.

Proactive inhibition exists in the two-step learning model discussed above. First, one must learn the responses, if they are not already in the repetoire. Then, one learns to associate the responses with the appropriate stimuli. The previous language experience of the student, whether acquired at home or school, if inappropriate, interferes with learning and recalling new responses. Thus, the student has not mastered the new material well enough to incorporate it into his repetoire for later use.

In the classroom, the urban black children having difficulty in reading frequently have not had sufficient opportunity to first learn the responses before being asked to connect them to stimuli correctly. For example, urban black children having difficulty perceiving a string of words as a meaningful whole, are commonly identified as students with reading problems. As far as the teacher sees, the children confuse the written words with similar words they already know, or the children fail to recall the words on the page at all. When the teacher asks the children to read the sentence, then to tell what it means, she is met with blank confused stares. The reason is not the inability of the children to master cognitive tasks such as reading comprehension, or lack of attention and concentration. Rather, the reason may be

insufficient time devoted to insuring that the students know, understand and can recall each of words correctly, before being asked to use them in a sentence. Indeed, because overcoming proactive inhibtion is not considered in scheduling the amount of time to be devoted to response learning in the classrooms, the students may be inadequately prepared for the reading tasks they are being asked to perform.

If proactive inhibition is the source of many common reading problems of urban black children, what are the conditions of learing which produce or counteract it? What about positive transfer of past learning on future learning? What are the conditions which produce proactive inhibition?

The following sections suggest research directions on the conditions of learning which affect proactive inhibition. Specifically, the investigator examines the characteristics of the learning situation, of the learning material and of the learner which directly influence proactive inhibition.

Characteristics of the Learning Situation

Characteristics of the learning situation which influence the degree of proactive inhibition are--Method of Presentation of the Learning Material, and the Retention Interval. From many years of research on proactive inhibition we know how these characteristics behave in a wide variety of learning situations.

Method of Presentation.

The level of proactive inhibtion is a function of the method in which the learning material is presented. Proactive

inhibition is greater in paired-associate learning (associating stimulus with response, commonly used in language arts programs) than in serial learning (mastering a list of often unrelated words or things). Thus, more effort is needed to overcome the effects of proactive inhibition in associative learning than simple rote tasks.

Proactive inhibition is greatest when very little time is given either to learn the material or to produce the correct answer. Interference is inversely related to the length of time at specific points in learning, such as between responses (inter-item interval), and between stimulus and response (intra-item interval.) The longer the presentation rate (time on task), the less the interference.

In brief, regardless of the type of learning task (associative or serial) proactive inhibition is influenced by the following methods of presentation:

(a) the length of time between when the stimulus is first presented and when the student must produce the response;

(b) the length of time given to simply learn the responses before having to associate them with stimuli;

(c) the amount of time between when the first word (or sentence or paragraph) to be learned is given and when the next one to be learned is presented; and

(d) the number of words or passages a student is given at any one time to learn.

Applied to the classroom, these fairly consistent research findings mean that when the amount of time on these specific learning tasks is increased, the rate of learning will also

increase, because the negative influence of past language on the present task will decrease. This further suggests new directions for more research on the optimal amounts of time urban black students spend on specific learning tasks in order to reach specific instructional objectives in the classroom.

Retention Interval.

The second characteristic of the learning situation affecting proactive inhibition is the length of time between learning and recall, called the retention interval. The influence of the retention interval on proactive inhibition has been studied under condtitions of extremely long intervals of several months (long term memory) to extremely short intervals of three seconds (short term memory). In long term memory experiments, proactive inhibition increases as the interval increases. The previously learned material is forgotten in long term memory studies.

In short term memory experiments, however, the findings are not clear. Sometimes proactive inhibition is present, for example, when the retention intervals are over eight seconds; other times it is not, such as when rehersal time is provided during initial learning.

The impact of the length of the retention interval itself on proactive inhibition is partially understood. Its effects are present in the classroom and recognized by public schools which finance summer school programs to retard forgetting over the summer. Since most classroom learning eventually requires long term memory of reading material, the impact of proactive inhibition is critical for school success. The problem to be

researched is how to reduce the perceived length of the retention interval, or to increase learning sufficiently to retard forgetting.

Characteristics of the Learning Material

The two characteristics of the learning material which have a significant effect on proactive inhibition are -- Meaningfulness and Similarity.

Meaningfulness.

Meaningfulness of the learning material is a function of its associative value, familarity and pronunciability (Marx, 1969). A meaningful word is integrated or associated with other elements in the learner's cognitive structure; it is experienced with relative frequency and is easy to pronounce.

From research we know that meaningful learning materials transfer more quickly and are retained longer than meaningless material. We also know that in paired-associate learning, such as most classroom learning, high meaning in the responses is more crucial in such learning than high meaning in the stimulus.

Similarity.

The second major characteristic of the learning material that influences proactive inhibition is similarity. There are several definitions and types of similarity: Semantic, Acoustic, and Structural. Semantic similarity refers to similarity in meaning of two words. Words semantically similar have the same referent.

Acoustic similarity refers to physical properties. Acoustically similar words sound alike to the listener.

Structural similarity refers to the number of identical elements between learning material. Words that are structurally similar have the same letters or letter patterns.

Research on similarity has manipulated, as an experimental variable, each of the three types of similarity defined. For each definition of similarity, research consistently demonstrates that the higher the degree of similiar of responses of old to new material, the greater the proactive facilitation and the longer the retention.

The proactive effects are such that reserach consistently shows that learning to make a similar response to an old stimulus is facilitated by the past experience of the learner, but learning to make a totally new and different response to an old stimulus is inhibited by past experience. These findings are true regardless of the learning material.

The degree of similarity (semantic, acoustic, or structural) in the response, not in the stimulus, determines the direction of the transfer to the greatest extent. Structural similarity between the language habits of the learner and nonsense syllables has been shown to significantly affect transfer. This suggests possibily fruitful areas of research delineating the transfer effects of specific similarities between the oral language of black urban children and the written material they are required to master at school.

Characteristics of the Learner

The characteristics of the learner which influence proactive inhibition in verbal learning are--The Level of Learning, Developmental Traits of the Learner, and the Linguistic Background of the Learner.

Level of Learning.

Perhaps the most consistent finding in verbal learning research is that transfer is a function of the level of learning of both old and new tasks. The influence of past experience on present learning varies with the level of learning. As learning on an old task increases transfer to the new task also increases. However, as learning a new task increases, freedom from transfer of the old task to the new also increases. The implication for classroom research is obvious. It relates to the effect of drill and practice on learning. Such research questions would include: How does one increase the level of learning in specific reading tasks to reduce proactive inhibition? How much time is needed to achieve the sufficient level of proficiency to retard proactive inhibition? How do you validly measure habit strength of newly acquired verbal skills? What is the threshold level of learning needed to overcome proactive inhibition at time of recall?

Developmental Traits.

Maturation and Age influence proactive inhibition. Once a child begins to talk, his language development reflects his

interactions with his environment. In the maturation process, the infant learns which of his verbal and gestural responses and which responses of others will lead to reward or punishment. By means of this instrumental learning, the infant progresses through prelinguistic stages (vocalization to babbling) to linguistic development (true words) by one year old. Linguistic development attains mastery between the ages of 4 and 6. By age 5 or 7, every normal child has mastered the basic structure system of his language including social class, regional and race-related features.

The first major part of speech to develop is vocabulary, first nouns and verbs, then pronouns and conjunctions. It has long been observed that young children appear to comprehend many words and grammatical structures they do not themselves use. The gap between what is understood and what is used is commonly very wide among young children. As children mature, however, this gap closes. The development of grammar like the development of vocabulary is a movemment from simple structures available in early linguistic development to complex structures in adult linguistic development.

In cross-age investigations, studies of verbal learning in children indicate that the process of verbal learning in chidren is similar to that of adults. Differences are in degree of learning,not in kind. The speed of verbal learning increases with age, just as transfer effect increases with age. The developmental reason for the improvement in verbal learning with age is related to the increased memory span and experiential background

of older students. The memory span at age 5 is one-half that of an adult. Thus at age 5, there is less internalized material available for transfer, either positive or negative, than at age 15.

In transfer studies of structural and semantic similarity, age is an important characteristic. Kindergarten children are found to be subject to greater interference as a function of structural similarity than semantic similarity. The weak language habits of young children not only limit the children's availability of mnemonic devices to overcome structural similarity, but also limit possible sources of semantic similarity in the children's vocabulary. This suggests possible avenues of research on the need to overcome proactive interference when introducing some language skills, but not others in the primary grades.

Although the effect of similarity in transfer studies are the same for adults and children, the magnitude of the transfer effect is a function of the level of language development of the learner. As age increases, there are more past experiences and stronger language habits to transfer to present learning. Thus, proactive inhibition should be present to the greater extent in the reading problems of junior high school students than in preschool children.

Developmental traits tend to affect verbal acquisition rate and transfer, but not retention of well-learned material. Adults and children remember the same material equally well over time, if they first learned the material to the same level of mastery.

Linguistic Background.

A whole emphasis on proactive inhibition in explaining and predicting the reading problems of urban black children presupposes a degree of difference in the linguistic background of urban black children which, if not appreciated, contributes to reading difficulties. Alternatively, proactive inhibition could be the result of initial bad instruction in the classroom, which must also be overcome.

By linguistic background is meant the system of socially-shaped vocabulary (lexicon), grammar (syntax) and pronunciation (phonemes) which the learner brings to the learning situation. This verbal repetoire is the result of the linguistic background of the learner, the shared language system of the learner's speech community.

Nonstandard variants of English spoken by any group of urban black children shift over time as the children get older and acquire different language. In addition, the nonstandard and standard systems blend over time due to greater social intercourse. Thus, the linguistic background is dynamic, not static. Today's primary school children do not use the same linguistic patterns in many respects that their parents and grandparents used. Thus, the points of similiary and difference between standard and nonstandard oral variants change constantly, and with each change so does the nature and direction of the transfer effect. In one sense, the presence or absence of proactive inhibition measures the amount of social integration or racial isolation experienced by urban blacks.

How oral speech of urban black children transfers to specific reading skills has not been well researched. In part, this lack of basic research is due to the emotion-ladden terms, such as "Black English" and "Black Dialect" which dominate the discussion. Researchers working in this area must successfully navigate the troubled waters of code words, angry spokespersons, and hostile camps. Examination of the transfer effects of linguistic background on reading proficiency has become a sensitive political issue.

There has, however, been some experimental research on proactive effects of oral and written language on reading comprehension. In one such study, 15 years age, Ruddell asked what effect similarity between oral and written language has on reading comprehension of students in Grade 4. He first assigned frequency values to written language structures on the basis of their frequency occurrence in oral languages of the students. Next, the students were asked to read high and low frequency passages. Ruddell found that the level of comprehension of written material was a function of the similarity between written and oral patterns of the children. Comprehension scores were highest for high frequency material, i.e. high similarity between oral and written patterns. Under these condtions, oral language facilitated reading comprehension. Under low similarity conditions, oral language either interferd with or had a neutral effect on language learning.

Linguistic background per se cannot explain or predict urban reading problems. Proactive facilitation or inhibition is

the result of the specific conditions of learning discussed above. The interaction between the specific conditions of learning and linguistic differences and similarities determines the nature and direction of the transfer effect. When linguistic differences are present, but recognized in the learning situation, transfer to new learning should be minimal. When the conditions of learning do not recognize linguistic background as sources of transfer effects, the acquisition and retention of new material will be impaired, research tells us.

Research on the impact of linguistic differences suffers from lack of a theorical base. The notion that the impact of linguistic background is lawful behavior, common to more than urban black children is not often reflected in the research. Indeed, the research emphasis has been at the applied/problem solving end of the spectrum. In addition, the nature of the research reflects the limitations of single discipline approaches to a complex problem.

Linguistic background as a variable affecting some aspects of reading of urban black children requires greater use of interdisciplinary research methodologies and more attention to theory-building. In short, basic research is needed in order to advance our understanding of how children learn and how to remember what they learn beyond the immediate problem at hand.

Summary

Reading is a complex set of activities, made up of simpler cognitive operations which must be mastered. At a minimum, reading requires visual memory for letters, words and sentence structure.

Reading problems of normal children appear to be lawful. They appear to follow laws related to retention. Children cannot ever hope to read if they have not first retained letters, then words.

The reading problems of children in urban schools also appear to be lawful. They appear to obey laws about retention. The reading problems of black children follow the two-step learning model: First, one learns to produce the responses; second, one learns to associate the responses with the appropriate stimuli.

The rate of acquisition, retention and forgetting commonly observed in reading behaviors of black children conform to two basic learning theories: Transfer and Inteference. Both theories explain and predict conditions which produce reading problems in city schools.

This paper examined the transfer effects of previous learning (especially oral language) on subsequent learning (classroom reading). When previous language interferes with new learning, proactive inhibition occurs. Acquisition and retention are low as a result. Examining urban reading as a specific application of Interference and Transfer theories, this paper defined the

conditions of learning which research has consistently shown to influence proactive inhibition:

- Characteristics of the Learning Situation
  - -- Method of Presentation of the Learning Material
  - -- The Retention Interval

- Characteristics of the Learning Material
  - -- Meaningfulness
  - -- Similarity (semantic, acoustic, and structural)

- Characteristics of the Learner
  - -- Level of Learning
  - -- Developmental Traits
  - -- Linguistic Background.

This paper concluded that basic research is needed in order to expand on and refine current theories of learning which predict conditions of proactive inhibition. Basic research should consciously borrow from different disciplines in order to overcome the conceptual and methodological limitations of single discipline studies. Finally, this paper stresses the need to build on past theory rather than to ignore it, thus throwing out the baby with the bath water. Refining basic theories about verbal learning will help researchers resist the temptation to rely on ill-conceived, emotion-ladden applied research problems which add little to our understanding of reading.

ISSUES IN URBAN READING: EXPANDING THE CURRENT NIE AGENDA

Marilyn Levie
Education Specialist
PSI Associates, Inc.

After reviewing NIE's research priorities for the next five years, and conducting a literature search in urban reading, PSI has identified the following topics as worthy of further research efforts.

At present, NIE's proposed research agenda has as its goals:

- To improve reading content;
- To improve classroom interaction;
- To focus on comprehension skills, oral language, view reading as a constructive process;
- To examine the interactive nature of reading, higher order thinking processes.

NIE's overall objective is "To begin investigating developmental and cultural differences that influence learning to read. Such investigations will further advance our theoretical understanding of the reading process. In addition to providing insights relevant to instructional practice."

Four topics which will be discussed are:

- Teaching reading/English across the curriculum,
- Strategies for motivating older readers,

- The role of critical thinking, problem solving and concept formation in teaching reading, and
- The use of advanced technology in teaching reading.

Teaching Reading/English Across the Curriculum

The "English in every classroom" experiment (Fader, 1971) implies a shared responsibility across the curriculum in teaching students to read. While at first glance such a system implies only that all teachers participate in the reading process, a closer look reveales important implications and considerations.

Teaching reading or English across the curriculum implies a school language or literacy policy. (Simon and Willinsky, 1980) More specifically, it raises two improtant issues: (1) what should the focus of a school language policy be? and (2) who is ultimately responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring such a policy?

In considering a school language policy, it is important to decide its focus. It may either emphasize increasing students' usage of correct form, or encourage them to use language more effectively as a means of understanding and challenging their situation (Simon and Willinsky, 1980). In the former case, teachers would most probably be concerned with the correct use of grammar, spelling and sentence structure. Thus, the emphasis might be on written and oral expression of "correct" form. In

the latter case, where language development is viewed more broadly, teaching reading across the curriculum implies a wider use of language to enhance students' ability to express themselves, conceptualize and articulate ideas, theories and opinions.

When such policies are developed, ultimate responsibility for its creation and focus can either be the school administration, faculty, community, parents, or a combination of these groups. However, the focus will in part depend upon the degree of agreement among these groups as to the purpose and goal of such a program.

If reading and English are taught in all subject areas, atrategies and methodologies must be developed. Theachers must be equipped with teaching strategies in the arts, science, etc., that increase students' language usage as well as written expression.

A further consideration is the standardization of a school language policy. This would ensure that all participating teachers are in agreement as to goals and objectives of the program. While this does not detract from creativity, it guarantees a degree of uniformity in program goals and objectives.

Given the decline in reading scores among urban youth, particularly in the middle school grades, teaching reading and English across the curriculum has merit for futher research. The following research questions are suggested:

- How can teaching reading in all subject areas serve to reinforce students' reading skills and increase motivation?
- Should the focus of a school language policy be on the correct use of grammar or on enhancing overall language development?
- What are the most effective strategies for teaching reading in the arts, sciences, and social studies areas?

The Use of Advanced Technology in Teaching Reading

The technology available for use in classrooms has greatly expanded in the past ten years. It is not unusual to find minicomputers, typewriters and video tapes in many classrooms. However, the extent to which such technology helps to advance students' reading achievement has not been thoroughly evaluated.

The future of technology in teaching reading should be further explored with emphasis on several questions:

- How can such technology be adapted for classroom use?
- Given the limited funds available, how cost-effective is the use of technology in schools?
- When using technology, which approaches have worked and why?
- What is the role of the teacher in using advanced technology in the classroom?

The last question above has several important implications for the teaching of reading. When technology, such as minicomputers are used, teacher support, involvement and monitoring of student progress are key to success (Wells and Bell, 1980).

Further, what is the role of computers; can students actually be taught reading skills in this manner, or are computers most viable as a vehicle for practice, reinforcement and honing of skills already obtained through standard teaching methods?

Research on the use of computers in the classroom should focus not only on their relevance to teaching reading, but also on which skills they are most appropriate to. Further, the role of the teacher must be clearly delineated. Such a program cannot exist in a vacuum; it must be tied to motivation techniques and alternative activities which provide reinforcement for reading skills. Such a system can effectively provide students with practice, but does not teach reading strategy (Wells and Bell, 1980).

In researching this area, methodologies for teaching strategies must be developed which make use of technology in ways that support successful teaching techniques, stimulate student motivation and achievement, and provide for teacher-student interaction. The following research questions are suggested?

- How cost-effective is the use of advanced technology in teaching reading?
- What is the role of the teacher in using advanced technology in teaching reading?
- Which components of a reading curriculum most lend themselves to the use of computers and other advanced technology?
- How can advanced technology be adapted for use in the classroom to teach reading?

Strategies for Motivating Older Readers

While many research studies have focused on the relationship between motivation and reading achievement (Lewis, 1980), the needs of older readers present an important challenge. Specifically, how do the ego needs of students in the 4th-8th grades affect their motivation toward reading?

In urban schools, reading scores typically decline during the middle school years. One possible explanation is that while students have failed at this point to attain basic reading skills, such skills are no longer specifically taught. Further, the strategies used to teach 6 and 7 year olds to read initially may not be appropriate to the needs of 9-12 year olds.

At this age, because students may have experienced repeated failure, motivation becomes a key concern. Several factors impact on motivation at this age; peer pressure, attitudes toward school in general, onset of puberty and the relationship between repeated reading failures and self-concept. Thus, creative strategies must be developed to motivate older readers.

One possible strategy involves exploration of learning styles and their relationship to motivation. That is, will older readers achieve better when taught according to their preferred learning modalities? Examining this issue would first involve developing a strategy for assessing student learning styles and second, developing teaching methodologies to address different learning modalities.

In examining the needs of older readers, the following research questions are suggested:

- What are the unique ego needs of older readers and how do they impact on motivation?
- What intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors most effect this age group?
- To what extent do learning styles and teacher strategies impact on the motivation of older readers?
- How can student learning styles be assessed and teaching methodologies to address them be developed?

The Role of Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Concept Formation in Teaching Reading

In defining a reading curriculum, the NIE research agenda focuses on improving comprehension skills. Included in a broad view of comprehension are critical thinking, problem solving and concept formation skills. The key research question to be addressed is the extent to which these specific comprehension skills are being taught and identification of those teaching strategies which enhance them.

The relationship between reading comprehension and writing skills may provide some of the answers to this question. Learning to write implies organizing one's thoughts and communicatig ideas (Hall, 1980). These same skills are needed to form concepts and solve problems in reading comprehension. Thus, programs which emphasize both writing and reading skills as one unit are most likely to develop these skills in students.

While research has been conducted on the relationship between reading and writing skills (Bazerman, 1980), the translation of this theory to actual classroom practice has not been fully explored. The language experience approach to reading considers reading and writing as complementary elements in learning written language (Hall, 1980). What is needed, perhpas, are additional strategies for teachers focusing on how reading and writing skills can be combined to enhance student comprehension skills. Such strategies might also focus on the needs of older readers mentioned in the previous section.

The following research questions are suggested in this area:

- To what extent are reading curricula focusing on the development of specific comprehension skills including concept formation, critical thinking and problem solving?
- What teaching strategies can be developed to address these skills, using reading and writing as complementary subjects?
- How could a reading curriculum which focuses on writing as well, impact on the motivation of older readers?

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN URBAN READING STUDY

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN URBAN READING STUDY

Fay Boyd Vaughn-Cooke
University of the District of Columbia
and
Center for Applied Linguistics

ABSTRACT

Recommendations regarding a research agenda for the Urban Reading Study were presented, following a summary of some of the key research on black English and reading.

The dialect interference hypothesis, which motivated the black English and reading studies, was reexamined in light of the findings from some of the major sociolinguistic studies on language variation, and additional negative evidence for this hypothesis was revealed. It was proposed that future research on the urban reading problem should eschew the narrow focus (on the linguistic code) that characterized many of the past studies and adopt the broader, more comprehensive framework embodied in the ethnographic approach to the study of behavior.

Introduction

Recommendations regarding a research agenda for a long term Urban Reading Study will probably be more fully appreciated if we review some of the available research which has focused on urban reading problems. Since the Urban Reading Study will be

primarily concerned with low-income black persons, I will restrict my review to that body of literature which is concerned with this population.

The most provocative, proposed solutions to the urban reading problem grew out of the research on black English, which began in the mid-sixties. This research claimed that while black English was a systematic, structured, and rule-governed variety of language, it contained some phonological, grammatical, and semantic features which differed from standard English. These findings stimulated an approach to the urban reading problem which maintained essentially that the black child's different linguistic system will interfere with his ability to learn to read standard English.

Motivated by this proposal, two related sets of studies emerged in the literature. These were non-empirical and empirical works which examined the relationship between black English and reading. They will be discussed in turn below.

Non-Empirical Studies

Perhaps the most influential non-empirical works, with respect to stimulating research on the urban reading problem, appear in the book, Teaching Black Children to Read, edited by Baratz and Shuy (1969). Two themes are expressed in most of the articles in the collection. One is that black English, the dialect spoken by most low income blacks, interferes with the ability

to learn to read, and the other is that the interference problem can be solved if black children are taught first to read in black English and then required at a later point to make a transition to reading in standard English. The following quote from Stewart best expresses the position embodied in the twin proposals.

> ". . . the grammatical differences between Negro dialect and standard English are probably extensive enough to cause reading-comprehension problems. Even in cases where the differences do not actually obscure the meaning of a sentence or passage, they can be distracting to a young Negro-dialect speaker who is trying to learn to read, and who can find but few familiar syntactic patterns to aid him in word identification. It is true that this child must be taught to read standard-English sentence patterns, but it is open to question whether he should be made to cope with the task of diciphering unfamiliar syntactic structures at the very same time that he is expected to develop effective word-reading skills. One simple way to avoid placing a double learning load on the lower-class Negro child who is learning to read would be to start with sentence patterns which are familiar to him--ones from his own dialect--and then move to unfamiliar ones from standard English once he has mastered the necessary word-reading skills." (Stewart 1969:182-83)

When presented in the form of an hypothesis to be tested, the above position seems worthy of examination, but most of us are aware of the fact that Stewart and many other researchers never took the time to demonstrate empirically that speaking black English interfered significantly with learning to read standard English. Some proponents of the interference hypothesis

moved ahead to develop textbooks in black English which were replete with theoretical and methodological problems related to representing dynamic systems like black English in print. The plan to use dialect readers as a teaching tool was quickly abandoned when parents and many educators rejected them on the grounds that they represented a conspiracy not to teach black children to read. The dialect interference hypothesis, however, was kept alive by another group of researchers, those who subjected it to empirical verification. Before considering these studies, an examination of some of the problems and contributions of the non-empirical works will be presented.

Problems of Non-Empirical Studies

The major problems of the non-empirical studies will be discussed under the five general categories presented below.

1. Non-empirical studies viewed black English as a static rather than a dynamic linguistic system.

Many studies which proposed that black English structures interfered with the ability to acquire reading skills in standard English never seriously considered the issue of variation in the dialect. Here I am referring to the fact that research has shown that black English is a system undergoing change, and thus many of its characteristic features appear in variant forms. Consider, for example, the past-tense marker, -ed. It is not the case that this structure is always absent in black English; it is for most speakers present at least some of the

time. If a speaker actually uses, in his oral productions, the variant (-ed) that is characteristic of standard English, then questions regarding the comprehension of the Standard dialect variants are of limited relevance, or possibly, even irrelevant for black English speakers learning to read. Proponents of the interference hypothesis erroneously characterized black English as a static system which led them to ignore the fact that many dialect speakers also have within their competence the standard English variants. Evidence for this characterization can be found in descriptions of black English that postulate only the variants which differ from standard English. An example may help explicate this problem.

In Stewart's (1969) programmatic article, "On the use of Negro dialect in the teaching of reading," the following recommendations are made regarding the representation of certain multisyllabic words in beginning readers for dialect speakers.

> ". . . it would be of little use to write almost, record, memorial, divorce, etc., in beginning reading materials for Negro-dialect speakers, with the hope that they would somehow 'pick up' the right usage from the spellings. It would seem more effective to write such words as 'most, 'cord, 'morial, 'vorce, etc., in at least the initial stage of such materials, so that the learner could first become familiar with the reading of their 'stems' in terms of his own pronunciation patterns, and only then to reach the appropriate standard-English prefixes by means of supplementary spoken drills, preparatory to introducing the standard-English spellings into the written text." (Stewart, 1969:196)

Some research conducted by Vaughn-Cooke (1976) provides strong evidence that Stewart's proposal outlined in the above quote constitutes a set of unnecessary steps for black English speakers learning to read. The steps are viewed as unnecessary because contrary to the assumption implicit in Stewart's recommendation, many such speakers have knowledge of the word without the initial syllable (the stem, e.g., 'most, 'cord) and the word with the initial syllable (e.g., almost, record), the latter of which is characteristic of standard English. Vaughn-Cooke's empirical investigation of the frequency of occurrence of nearly a hundred variants for multisyllabic words in the speech of 29 (8-20 years) black speakers revealed that lexical variants with the initial syllable present (record) occurred about as often as variants without the initial syllable in the speech of the 29 informants. It is also important to note here that some variants, as Table 1 below shows, always exhibited the initial syllable (e.g., extent, exactly and investigate), that is they never alternated with root forms (e.g., 'stent, 'xactly and 'vestigate).

Table 1. Examples of Standard and Black English Lexical Variants That Occurred in the Speech of 29 Informants

until	~ 'til	invaded	~ 'vaded
expect	~ 'spect	unless	~ 'less
experience	~ 'sperience	excuse	~ 'scuse
instead	~ 'stead	exactly	~
except	~ 'cept	investigate	~
extent			

Vaughn-Cooke's findings strongly indicate that there is no basis for the assumption underlying the dialect interference hypothesis; that is that black English speakers have no knowledge of equivalent standard English variants.

Specifically, with respect to the multisyllabic words mentioned by Stewart, there is no basis for claiming that black English speakers have no knowledge of the variants with the initial unstressed syllables. As noted above, Vaughn-Cooke's research showed that 29 young black speakers produced variants with initial syllables as often as they produced variants without such syllables. Evidence for knowledge of standard English variants has been found in other variation studies. Relevant results from two of these studies, Wolfram's and Labov's, will be examined below.

Wolfram (1969) in his Detroit study examined nine variable features of black English. These included: word-final consonant clusters, word medial and final th, syllable final d, postvocalic r, the possessive marker, the plural marker, the third person singular marker, multiple negation, and copula and auxiliary be absence. The frequency counts for the working class speakers revealed that both standard and black English variants were recorded for all of the nine features examined. Consider the following figures for the absence of word final consonant clusters in the speech of Wolfram's working class informants.

Table 2. Percentage of Final Cluster Member Absence for Monomorphemic and Bimorphemic Words in Two Linguistic Environments (Data from Wolfram, 1969: 62, 68)

	Linguistic Environment	
	Consonantal	Non-Consonantal
Monomorphemic Words		
UW	93.5	65.4
LW	97.3	72.1
Bimorphemic Words		
UW	72.5	24.3
LW	76.0	33.9

An examination of the percentages in Table 2 shows that when monomorphenic words (e.g., fast, risk, desk) are followed by a consonant (e.g., fast boy), the final member of the clusters in these words are nearly always absent. Note for example that the upper working and lower working classes show, respectively, 93.5 and 97.3 percent cluster reduction in the consonantal environment. A very different picture emerges, however, when cluster reductions is examined in the non-consonantal environment of bimorphemic words (e.g., missed, dressed, stuffed). Note that the upper and lower working classes show, respectively, only 24.3 and 33.9 percent cluster reduction in this environment. The point is that the figures in Table 2 provide unmistakable evidence that black English speakers produce, on many occasions, words with final clusters. Given that this is the case, there is

simply no basis for assuming that these speakers do not produce such structures, and further, that their failure to produce clusters will interfere with learning to read.

Labov's (1972) quantitative study of copula deletion in black English constitutes a third example of empirical evidence for the use of standard English variants by black English speakers. He documented the presence of the copula in many syntactic constructions produced by his informants. The data in Table 3 below illustrate this point.

Table 3. Percentages of Forms of Is, According to Grammatical Category of Complement for Two Groups in All BEV Styles (Data From Labov, 1972:86)

	NP	PA	Loc	V+ing	gon
Thunderbirds (13 subjects)					
Full	40	25	30	4	0
Contracted	37	27	34	30	12
Deleted	23	48	36	66	88
Total	100	100	100	100	100
No. of Forms	210	67	50	46	40
Jets (29 subjects)					
Full	37	34	21	7	3
Contracted	31	30	27	19	3
Deleted	32	36	52	74	93
Total	100	100	100	100	99
No. of Forms	373	209	70	91	58

Table 3 shows that in five pre-syntactic environments (noun phrase, e.g., she is a girl; predicate adjective, e.g., she is pretty; locative, e.g., she is there; verb + ing, e.g., she is walking; and gonna, e.g., she is gonna go) the Thunderbirds (a preadolescent group) and the Jets (an adolescent group) produced some full and/or some contracted forms of is. In other words, is was never always deleted from the speech of Labov's informants. Table 3 indicates that the percentage of contracted and full forms was highest when potential is was followed by a noun phrase and lowest when potential is was followed by gonna. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that Labov's data, like Wolfram's and Vaughn-Cooke's data, provide clear evidence that black English speakers produce, in many linguistic environments, standard English variants. Specifically, with respect to Labov's findings, there is no sound basis for assuming that black English speakers do not produce the copula is, and that their failure to produce this structure will interfere with the acquisition of reading skills.

In sum, Vaughn-Cooke's, Wolfram's, and Labov's findings, as well as findings reported in other variation studies (Fasold, 1972) raise a rather profound question for the interference hypothesis, which is: what is the basis for assuming that black English speakers have no knowledge (productive or comprehensive) of equivalent standard English variants? If there is no basis for this assumption, as research strongly indicates, then there is no basis for the interference hypothesis.

2. The view of the urban reading problem in non-empirical studies was too simplistic.

The non-empirical studies focused almost solely on the code in its approach to investigating solutions to the reading problem. No systematic consideration was given to the teacher, the classroom, the home, or school and community attitudes toward the reading problem.

3. Non-empirical studies failed to consider systematically powerful counter-examples to the dialect interference hypothesis.

Theories regarding the urban reading problem must be able to account for the fact that a sizeable number of dialect speakers do, indeed, learn to read standard English. Systematic examination of the process by which some of these speakers learn to read would, more than likely, provide some insights regarding a solution to the urban reading problem.

4. Researchers, working within the non-experimental framework, moved ahead to apply principles underlying the interference hypothesis without first adequately testing this hypothesis.

The use of dialect readers were recommended as a general solution before strong empirical evidence for the interference hypothesis was obtained.

5. The major proponents of the dialect interference hypothesis did not seriously consider cultural values that are embedded in attitudes toward black English and its use as an educational tool.

Parents' and educators' attitudes toward the dialect must be taken seriously by researchers, even when they are negative. Failure to deal effectively and to examine critically the

attitudes of powerful and key persons like parents and teachers when attempting to implement a reading plan, is to deal a fatal blow to any solution to the urban reading problem. Consider, for example, what happened to the dialect readers.

Contributions of Non-empirical Studies

In spite of the major problems outlined above, the non-empirical studies provided some important contributions toward a solution to the urban reading problem. First, the non-empirical investigators alerted teachers to the fact that black English phonological and grammatical variants should be taken into account during the assessment of reading ability. Thus, major improvements were made in the area of diagnosing reading problems exhibited by black English speakers.

Second, the non-empirical studies provided the motivation for the empirical works which tested the interference hypothesis. The evidence from these latter works strongly suggests that we must search beyond the language code for an explanation regarding why black English speakers fail to master expected reading skills. Overall, the empirical works show, like the variation studies, virtually no support for the dialect interference hypothesis. The following summary of some of the key empirical studies illustrates this point.

Empirical Studies

The dialect interference hypothesis was tested, utilizing both phonological and grammatical features from black English. Selected studies representing the two types of data will be discussed in turn.

Phonological Studies

One of the first studies to test the hypothesis of phonological interference was conducted by Rystrom (1970). This investigator compared the effect of training in the production of standard English phonology on the reading achievement of black English speakers. The design of the study was constructed such that the experimental group received training in producing standard English phonology, while the control group received language arts training without any specific emphasis on standard English. Rystrom fround that training in standard English phonology did not produce significant differences between the two groups on three measures of reading achievement.

Another test of the hypothesis of phonological interference was carried out by Melmed (1971), who compared black third-graders with white third-graders on their ability to discriminate auditorily, to produce, and to comprehend in oral and silent reading specific phonological features of black English. While the subjects differed from the whites on auditory discrimination and production of selected features that are characteristic of black

English, the two groups did not differ in their ability to comprehend features in oral and silent reading.

A third and slightly more recent study which tested the hypothesis of phonological interference was conducted by Simons (1974). This investigator required second, third and fourth grade black children to read real and nonsense word pairs that are homophones in black English, e.g., bus - bust, hus - hust. Simons hypothesized that the first member of each word pair would be easier to read than the second, because the former's spelling is closer to black English phonology. The findings revealed that in all three grades, there were either no differences between the word types or the difference favored the second member.

Grammatical Studies

Considerably more grammatical than phonological studies have been conducted to test the interference hypothesis. Following the format of my discussion of the phonological studies, brief summaries of a few of the frequently cited grammatical investigations will be presented.

Sims (1972) tested the hypothesis of grammatical interference by analyzing the reading errors of black English speaking second grade children when they read stories in standard English and black English (as represented by dialect readers). The results of her analysis indicated that the standard stories were

read with the same or fewer errors than were the dialect stories.

An investigation by Johnson and Simons (1973) required second and third grade black children to read equivalent stories written in standard and black English syntactic constructions. These researchers found no difference between dialect and standard representations of the stories in the areas of comprehension and recall.

In addition to the studies cited above, at least four other studies tested the hypothesis of grammatical interference and found no support for its underlying proposal. These include the works of Schaaf (1971), Nolen (1972), Mathewson (1973) and Marwit and Newman (1974).

Recommendations

Given the basic conclusions that have been drawn from my examination of the linguistic assumptions underlying the non-empirical studies, and the findings of selected empirical works, the Urban Reading Study, in its search for answers to the reading problem, should avoid approaches which focus only on the linguistic code and employ the more comprehensive framework embodied in the ethnographic approach to the study of behavior. The application of this approach to the study of reading was discussed by McDermott (1977). Such an approach would involve studying the acquisition of the reading process in its cultural

and social context. Following ethnographers of language, an ethnographer of reading might analyze this behavior in terms of a number of components:

Setting. Where and when does reading occur?

Participants: Who is involved in the process--reader, teacher, parent, siblings? What is the nature of their involvement, interaction?

Language variety: Which language or dialect is used? What effect does the language variety have on the acquisition of the reading process?

Purpose or Goal: What is the purpose of the reading act?

Calls for an ethnographic approach to the study of the acquisition of reading skills have been made by other researchers. Simons (1979:121), for example, summed up a discussion on dialect interference with the following observations and recommendations.

> "Whether . . . sources of reading interference . . . are prevalent enough to account for the magnitude of the reading failure of black children must remain an open question until more research has been conducted. My guess is that dialect is only part of the problem. There are other differences between various aspects of black children's culture and the school culture that could lead to interference with learning to read. There are peer-group influences . . . audience participation expectations . . . turn taking rules, and nonverbal communication strategies . . . in black culture that may conflict with the instructional situation in schools. There is also teachers' failure to build on modes of communication that are specific to black culture such as verbal play and the emphasis on form rather than content . . . All these factors, including dialect, when added to a more adequate knowledge of the psychological processes involved in learning to read than we presently possess, could go a long way toward explaining and remedying the reading problem of black children."

If we can develop a plan for research which has the capacity to provide careful and insightful, ethnographic analyses of the complex of factors mentioned by Simons, we should be able to recommend some sound solutions to the urban reading problem.

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Reading Achievement and the Social-Cultural Frame of Reference of Afro American Children

A. Wade Boykin

Howard University

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ABSTRACT

It is incontestable that the reading achievement of a preponderance of Afro American children, particularly those from inner city working class backgrounds, remains deplorably low. Even though there is virtual unanimity of opinion that a low reading performance pattern exists, there is considerable divergence of opinion on how the "problem" should be defined, what is its etiology and what are the appropriate strategies and tactics to facilitate enhanced reading proficiency. The "linguistic deficiency" approach has been the historically dominant one over the past two decades. However this perspective has come under increased criticism in recent years via two alternative approaches, the cultural integrity and the social structural vantage points. The cultural integrity view has persuasively argued that we must take into consideration moreso the Afro American cultural-stylistic purview in the reading process. The social structural viewpoint argues that we must put the reading process moreso into its wider societal context. While each of these alternative viewpoints has it merits, they are not without their shortcomings. However, this author argues that the two are actually complementary such that the strengths of each position can compensate for the weaknesses of the other. This paper offers a fusion of the two perspectives in the services of providing a holistic analysis of the reading process as it pertains to Afro American children. It is particularly argued that we should concentrate relatively more on the motivational facilitiation of reading activity as opposed to remedial training in specific information processing subcomponents of the reading complex. It is proposed that if we non-superficially incorporate the Afro American child's cultural stylistic frame of reference into the reading interactional matrix, we will significantly enhance his/her reading task persistence, engagement and interest. Otherwise, we will continue to find schooling serving a prinicipally sorting function of relegating Black people to lower echelons of the social status and economic hierarchy in this society. This author advocates that research aimed at ferreting out the efficacy of this line of reasoning is sorely needed.

Reading Achievement and the Social - Cultural Frame of Reference of Afro-\merican Children

A. Wade Boykin

Howard University

Inarguably, the reading achievement of a preponderence of Afro-American children, particularly those from inner-city working class backgrounds, remains deplorably low. It can be compellingly asserted that if one's pattern of reading non-proficiency is not altered by adulthood, he/she will be poorly equipped to handle adequately the immense informational demands that must be negotiated in a technologically advanced, post-industrial society (Bell, 1976) as is the United States. In the past two decades, largely through the impetus of the war on poverty, the poor reading achievement of ethnic minorities has been one of the prime concerns of those involved in attempting to alleviate social problems. The condition of low reading achievement among Afro-American children has been widely and convincingly documented. However the etiology for the low reading performance and the appropriate strategies and tactics to facilitate or enhance reading proficiency are subjects of considerable debate.

Much of the work has been done from what is often referred to as the deviancy perspective (Baratz and Baratz, 1970). Those who have been victimized by poor reading achievement are characteristically blamed for their failures (Ryan 1971).

Thus there has been a seemingly incessant intellectual search to find the factor(s) possessed by the Afro-American child or located in his/her immediate ecological environment to hold responsible for the inadequate pattern of performance.

Spearheaded by the work of Bereiter and Engelmann (1966), the prevailing tendency has been to discern the linguistic deficiencies of Black children which result in poor reading in particular and low school achievement in general. Bereiter and Engelmann argue that Black children preponderantly suffer from a general language deprivation linked to inadequate cognitive socialization. These children are said to possess immature verbal communication skills, particularly in the "use of language to explain, to describe, to instruct, to inquire, to hypothesize, to analyze, to compare, to deduce and to test. And these are the uses that are necessary for academic success" (p. 31). Bereiter and Engelmann posited that the language skills of such children functionally parallel those of children who are deaf. In a similiar vein, Ausubel (1966) asserted that the retardation in language development is tied to inadequate experience with the process of attaching labels to familiar objects and in turn symbols to the labels. Moreover not only do Black kids manifest low levels of abstract verbal functioning, but they are lacking in perceptual discrimination skills as well.

The putative functional linkages of inadequate language de-

velopment to poor reading have been discussed by Blank (1970). She asserts that failure to read is related to failure in discriminating orally presented linguistic modes. Poor readers, it is argued, experience difficuluty in comprehending the cognitive demands imposed by an academic task. That is, they are deficient in capturing accurately, sequentially presented task components, experiencing problems in, for example, listening to a sequence, retaining the temporally presented stimulus input in order to judge one input against some other and then discerning whether the stimuli are similar or different.

Given such deficiencies the modal intervention strategy called for has been some form of remediation. It is deemed necessary to "operate" on the child directly to correct the deficiencies. Thus a plethora of tutorial programs have been implemented over the past two decades aimed at "verbally bombarding" the Black child in order to overcome the resident linguistic inadequacies.

The linquistic deficiency perspective as it pertains to the reading process has been quite persuasively criticized in recent years. While the criticisms have been many, three have stood out to this author has especially compelling. For one, in general the ensuing programs and intervention strategies have not produced substantial changes in the reading levels of the target populations. This has unfortunately led some to espouse and even implement programs which pervasively and profoundly inter-

vene into the home life of the children in question. The argument being that we have been misguided and unrealistic in centering our remediation strategies on the children as they interface with school. Instead we must remediate the child's home socialization experiences. The dangers and evils of such a euthenics approach have been discussed elsewhere (Boykin, 1979) and won't be detailed here. However one negative implication of such a "remedy" is that it undermines the cultural integrity of Afro-Americans. Indeed that Afro-Americans have a coherent, well-delineated culturally appropriate language system flys in the face of the linquistic deficiency approach and represents another cogent criticism of it (Labov, 1979; Baratz and Baratz, 1970; Smitherman, 1975). The cultural distinctiveness of Black Americans is not soley linked to language considerations. It encompasses a wide range of stylistic manifestations (Gay, 1975; Dix, 1976, White, 1972). It has been argued that we should cease the Eurocentric tendency to examine the psychological activity of Afro-Americans against a White middle-class standard. We fail to understand adequately the behavioral character of Afro-American school-children if we construe them in terms of varying degrees of inadequate dark White school children. The argument continues that we will not appreciably alter reading or other forms of school achievement for these children unless in our predagogical for-

mats we take into consideration these children's cultural frame of reference (Morgan, 1980, Hale, 1980).

The dominant perspective has also been criticized for its failure to put the schooling process into its larger social-structural political context (Ogbu, 1978; Bowles and Gintis, 1973). The argument here goes that we can not underestimate the function of schooling in a capitalist society. We must understand that the function. Thus teachers and school administrators, sometimes unwittingly assign status within the school based on idealized forms of behavior treasured by the larger society. Those children who more adequately fit the ideal forms are given higher status and permitted to learn more, those widely divergent are "permitted" to learn less (Rish, 1970 Silverstein and Krate, 1975). This hierarchial structure within the school situation comaes to mirror the hierarchially structured division of labor in the wider society. It just happens that a preponderance of Black children come out towards the bottom of the structure in the school setting and thus are being prepared for their place as adults towards the bottom of the economic structure in the larger society. It is also argued that at a very early age Black children perceive what their place will be as adults in the wider society, and thus come not to believe that schooling will appreciably alter their fate (Ogbu, 1978).

The cultural difference and social structural models have been gathering increasing attention and supporters in the past few years. Yet these views are not without their critics as well. In short, the cultural difference model has been faulted for being similistic and for not taking into consideration the larger societal framework. The social structural may be faulted for being overly

pessimistic, for not offering concrete strategies to enhance reading and other forms of academic achievement, and for failing to delineate and adequately account for the dynamic, interpersonal qualities inherent in academic and task performance. Yet in spite of the shortcomings, these two frameworks retain considerable explanatory value. What is needed however is to properly integrate the approaches, taking advantage of their considerable complementary qualities. In this way each can compensate for the others explanatory weaknesses in the service of providing a more accurate description of and prescription for reading achievement of Afro-American schoolchildren. Over the remaining pages, an attempt will be made to suggest a possible fusion and particular tactics for facilitating reading performance will be entertained. Hopefully these suggestions can be viewed as viable alternatives to the extant approaches attempted thus far. It is hoped they will also help to set a context for a different set of research directions attendant to the Black childs reading performance.

One additional consideration must be made. In the last few years, there has been considerable attention given to an information processing approach to reading (Reber & Scarborough; 1977).

A perusal of the standard journals in reading and education as well as relevant texts (e.g. Singer and Ruddell, 1976; Smith, 1978; Hall, Ribovich and Ramig, 1979) reveals that recent de-

velopments in cognitive psychology have had a major impact on the themes, concepts and research emphases in current analyses of the reading process. The remedies of low reading performance in turn have been likewise influenced. The sentiment seems to be that we have not appreciably altered reading achievement because previously we had insufficiently appreciated the complexity of the cognitive skill components of the reading process. What are needed, the argument goes, are more thorough tasks analyses of the requisite sub-skills involved in reading. Consequently, attention is given to factors like the detection of orthographic structural invariance, access to short-term memory codes; phonemic blending; acquisition of print and sound correspondance rules; the decoding of syntactic regularities and the likes (C. Jones, 1979; Glushko, 1979, Ehri and Wilce, 1979; Strange, 1979, Curtis, 1980).

To be sure, considerable debate exists as to the appropriate ways to construe the most significant information processing requirements in reading. In fact, as Doehring and Aulls (1979) point out several competing "partial explanations" have been offered to account for the cognitive ingredients of the reading complex. Consider the "top bottom" vs "bottom up" controversy. The former position maintains that successful reading is best understood from analysis of the knowledge and components skills that the reader brings with him, while the latter position maintains that we better understand the reading process by starting

with specifying the textual and graphic information, that is, the visual and linguistic structural information on the page (Biemiller, 1979). I maintain that such debates are exercises in conceptual and analytical hairsplitting and serve only to take us farther away from a functional understanding of how to facilitate reading for Black inner city youths. There are still futher reasons for arguing that the information processing approach will not bear heuristic fruit. For one it is a disguised version of the linguistic deficiency approach. The problem is still seen as inherent in the reader per se. What has changed is merely that the task of reading is contrued at a more "sufficiently" microscopic level and thus we gain a putatively more rigorous handle on the deficiencies of the child. Such an approach therefore inherits the same criticisms lauched by the cultural difference and social structural perspectives.

In a similiar vein, a favorite tactic has been to examine the performance of good versus poor readers under essentially constant conditions with the intent of discerning the personal or processing characteristics of the good reader that give him the superiority over the poor reader (e.g. Lefton et al, 1979 Garner, 1980; Curtis, 1980). This tactic suffers from two critical flaws. For one, its leads one to conclude that the causative reasons for the poor reader's performance level are their lacking of the characteristics possessed by the good readers. It is just a plausible to conclude that the poor

reader's characteristics are a consequence or by-product not the cause of his reading level. In the Garner (1980) study for example, it was found that good readers were more apt to notice when a text had been altered to produce a less comprehensible passage than were poor readers. Thus poor readers did not differentially rate the comprehension difficulty of the altered and non-altered texts, while good readers did. It was argued that this difference was due to the good readers possessing more sensitive and sophisticated attentional deployment strategies. Just as plausible however, is that the poor readers were less interested in the task and did not take it as seriously. To suggest that the way to improve the poor readers performance is to teach them better attentional deployment strategies per se may be misguided. What may be needed is to devise ways for more properly motivating them in a reading context, so that they will exert greater intentional effort for example. If one in this motivationally facilitated context then wants to introduce some technique to sharpen up the poor readers attentional strategies in this context, so much the better. But this should not be of primary concern. Obviously, if the poor reader has survived in the world up to this point, he has surely learned how to discriminate between clear and ambiguous information, easy and difficult to comprehend messages, in other contexts. Which brings us to the second shortcoming. In pursuing this tactic we often fail to recognize the important in-

fluence of the immediate context on reading performance. More will be said on this point later. In all, the information-processing approach is myopic, midirected and culturally insentitive. But it is also devoid of motivational considerations. It can be persuasively argued that reading enhancement of Afro-American children should be predicted upon a motivational foundation (C. Jones, 1979).

What is needed is a more holistic approach to the reading process as opposed to acquiring greater analytical insight into the "appropriate" information processing sub-skills. It is the case that the reading process is more complex than once thought. However we should not seek this complexity in dissecting the sequential steps of information processing. Instead we should seek it in the social cultural transactional agendas of the teacher, as schooling agent, the reader and his/her classroom peers. We should also recognize that reading, in actually, it not a natural process. It requires the learning of a rather arbitrary and intrinsically meaningless set of symbols and combining them in ways to produce external or internal sounds according to arbitrarily set rules (e.g. left to right sequencing, top to bottom progression) many which defy the law of parsimony and often defy regularity. It is a communication process which pales in comparison to the richness, variety and texture of conversational communication, which a child has gone a long ways toward mastering by the time he/she confronts the formal reading process It is an artificially contrived, detached, realm with-

in which to gain competence. Considering these factors, there is absolutely no reason to expect that reading per se will be universally viewed by children as a inherently enjoyable and stimulating activity. We are misguided if we disproportionately pursue how to get the child to more adequately tune into the component skills of reading. We must give priority to prompting the child to become task involved, task persistent and task interested. This will require greater understanding of and insight into the immediate context within which reading activity takes place.

We should also recognized that even the best readers can not articulate what are the constellation of skills which constitute their reading proficiency. They just can do it. I contend that if children are optimally motivated they will eventually catch on to reading even if they don't initially have a "knack" for it. We ought not concern ourselves so much with whats wrong with the child for not mastering this process. Instead we should devise ways for sustaining the child's task engagement. Persistent task engagement implies practice. With sufficient virtually any child will learn to read and read well. In fact evidence does exist that enhancing task engagement leads to improve reading performance for Black inner-city grade school children (Wyne and Stuck, 1979). This is where cultural considerations come in.

The Afro-American cultural experience is surely not mono-

lithic, it is not captured by only a single ingredient. (Valentine, 1971). I have discussed this issued more extensively elsewhere (Boykin, In Press). However, suffice it to say there are several stylistic manifestations of the Black cultural experience, adhered to in various forms and in varying degrees by Afro-Americans depending upon the character of competing cultural socialization forces (Boykin, In Press) Thus it would seem appropriate to refer to the cultural integrity of the

experience as opposed to the cultural difference. Several consistent themes emerge out of the textural richness and variety of the extant Afro-American psychological experience. Among the most discernible are an affective-feeling propensity manifested as a person to person emphasis, with a personal orientation towards as opposed to a person to object emphasis with an impersonal orientation towards people (White, 1972; Dixon, 1975; Young, 1970); enhanced responsiveness to variability and intensity of stimulation, that this author (Boykin, 1978) refers to as "psychological verve"; a movement orientation which emphasizes intensity and variability coupled with psychological centrality of music as opposed to movement compression (Thompson, 1966; Gultentag, 1972; Morgan, 1980); An improvisational quality which emphasizes empressive individualism as opposed to possessive invidualism (J. Jones 1979; Israel, 1978); an event orientation toward time, such that time is what is done, as opposed to a clock orientation (Wilson, 1972; J. Jones, 1979), among others.

The present author argues that if we non superfically incorporate such emphases and orientations into the reading context we will provide meaningful salient, familiar and interesting vehicles to promote the necessary motivational facilitation.

The actual character of and transmission mechanisms through which cultural stylistic incorporation enhances academic motivation await illustration. However, it can be persuasively argued that failing to acknowledge the existence of the cultural frame of reference of Afro American children while simultaneously attempting to imperialistically inculcate a relatively unfamiliar and often non-congruent cultural purview, will be coded by the child as a stifling, dehumanizing, degrading and antagonistic experience. There is good reason to believe that Black scholchildren enter school at least not turned off by the prospects of academic learning (Boykin, 1978). However they will surely be soon turned off by the educational process when confronted with the artificial, contrived and arbitrary competence modalities (like reading and spelling) that are presented in ways which undermine the children's cultural frame of reference. Confronted with this matrix of pedogogical adversity, there is small wonder why Black children soon become alienated, unmotivated and potentially disruptive in a classroom setting (Gay, 1978). Such an atmosphere will not promote reading competence. It is here that the social structural analysis becomes relevant.

Consider that schooling serves two functions. Along with the development of academic skills, schools also serve a critical socialization function. That is they help "shape" kids to be good classroom citizens. As Silverstein and Krate (1975) point out, achievement in school is dependent upon two factors, a "behavioral-attitudinal"

factor, which consists of utilizing the socially acceptable ways of conducting oneself in a classroom setting and a "work-skill" factor, which consists of those abilities required to master the cognitive domain of the curriculum. It appears to be the case that the latter factor is often predicated upon the first.

If children do not come to school with the "appropriate" prerequisite behavioral-attitudinal repertoire, then it stands to reason that considerable classroom time must be taken up with attempting to train the children to be good classroom citizens. If the proper rituals, procedures and ambience are not achieved, then a conducive atmosphere for cognitive skill attainment won't be achieved and thus such such cognitive activities can not prperly take place. If Black children bring a culturally divergent behavioral-attitudinal repertoire, it stands to reason that a teacher will devote greater classroom time to providing the children with the appropriate repertoire. From the teacher's standpoint his/her responsibility is to socially train the socially untrained. The more trouble the teacher has "training" the children the more preoccupied he/she becomes with behavioral-attitudinal considerations. From the student's standpoint they "perceive" that the teacher castigates and rejects their characteristic ways of relating to the world. Naturally they will resist the social shaping process; Particularly if the behavioral attitudinal repertoire they are to be shaped to, is not compatible with the pre-existing repertoire. There is strong reason to believe that such incompatibility exists for a preponderant number of Black schoolchildren (Gay, 1978; Gay and

Abrahams, 1973; Morgan, 1980). Thus a vicious cycle spiraling around behavioral control ensues, and cogniti.e skill development is minimized. Given this line of argument, a critical consequence is that the teacher comes, either wittingly or unwittingly, to serve as an agent of social order in carrying out its sorting function in the pursuit of the limited high status and high economic reward positions. In effect, the unsuccessful attempt to shape black children to be good classroom citizens turns into a successful venture in preparing children to occupy low status positions as adults. Consequently, school socialization and society sorting become inseperable. The difficultly of the socialization task makes for an easy and highly "defensible" sorting function. Much of this is brought into focus by Silverstein and Krate (1975):

"From the vast array of human attributes, every culture selects for cultivation those few that meet the requirements of successful functioning within that system. Children who possess these characteristics, which adults expect will contribute to success in high-status occupations, are likely to receive favored treatment in the schools, thus ensuring the frequent confirmation of initial expectations. American schools operate to socialize a sort out those children who are best able to adopt the behavior requirements of employees within a corporate-capitalistic, technocratic political economy. Among these behavioral characteristics are strong impulse controls and the subordination of emotion to rational-conceptual thinking; the willingness to channel attention and energy

into somewhat autonomous efforts to achieve high levels of performance, in a dispassionate manner, on task often unrelated to one's personal motives and desires, cooperativeness and willingness to accept direction from those in authority. Schooling thus functions to adapt children to characteristics of work in an advanced capitalist country- such characterstics as job fragmentation, hierarchical lines of authority, bureaucratic organization, and unequal reward. In order for most individuals to succeed, first in school and then on the job, they must accept and come to view as natural these possibly unattractive, relatively undemocratic aspects of work." p. 205-6.

It is argued that Black children do no automatically accept the stylistic socialization premises outlined above, many of which are incongruous with their cultural frame of reference. Until or unless we find meaningful ways to incorporate these children's stylistic tendencies, the rule will be mutual antagonism between student and teacher, with little opportunity for facilitating reading achievement.

It is important to pause now to make salient the implications of the line of argument developed in this paper. The issue before us is two-fold. We ask what is the task of reading and how to enhance reading performance in Black children. These are clearly separable yet not unrelated issues. Consider first that the task of reading can be defined at many different levels of analysis. It can be construed social structurally in that we seek to understand how the child negotiates academically

given the constraints or supports of society at large. We could understand the reading process in terms of the contextually-bounded transactions between teachers and students. The reading process could be understood in terms of the analysis of the components involved in the processing of textual information. It is clear that each analytical level sheds light on the reading process. However, I argue that the structural analysis is too macroscopic, and the information processing, approach too microscopic to be compellingly informative of the special reading needs of a distinct social cultural group as are Afro-Americans. Furthermore in concentrating on the intra and interpersonal activities attendant to the reading process, I believe we are in a relatively better position to suggest concrete strategies of facilitating Black chilrens reading performance.

In recognizing that the Black child's reading performance is low, we acknowledge what he <u>does not</u> do. In examining this performance decrement from the standpoint of a deficiency, information-processing or good reader vs. poor reader standpoint, we dwell on essentially the cognitive question of what the child <u>can not</u> do. Given ample evidence of the cognitive competence of the Black child within his own social-cultural milieu, it seems more appropriate to construe the performance decrement issue initially and principally in terms of what he

will not do. This then is a motivational question. If this analysis is correct, then we should find it more expeditious to take the Black child for what he is, social-culturally speaking, and attempt to move him where he should go vis a vis reading proficiency by providing contextual inducement for his will to go there.

It seems worth sharing two illustrations where reading achievement was influenced by incorporating a Black cultural orientation into the pedagogical formats. One example is from the work of Piestrup (1973) who found that a "Black Artful" approach used by teachers resulted in greater reading achievement for first grade Black children in comparison to several other more traditional approaches. This Black Artful approach was characterized by lively gesticulations and rhythmic verbal intonational interplay between teacher and student. Elsewhere, C. Jones (1979) reports considerable success with a teaching of reading method rooted in a Black cultural frame of reference. One feature of this method was that the children constructed their own personal reading text based on personal experiences encountered either at home or in the classroom. Examples like they two unfortunately are few in number. Much more research is obviously needed, before any reliable and generalized kinds of suggestions can be offered. From a speculative point of view, it seems we need to present reading materials in a context which promotes "psychological verve" and attempt to systematically incorporate verve into

the themes of stories to be read. We need to emphasize in both the content and presentation, person to person transactions. We need to make the Afro-American reader feel that he/she is learning the skills in his/her personal characteristic style of expression. We need to encourage the incorporation of the integration of music and movement into the reading context. Yet in making these claims, it should not be lost that the attitudes and expectations of teachers and other school personnel, conditioned both by the prevailing social-structural and cultural ideology, play a significant role in student achievement (Persell, 1977; McDermott, 1974). It will be crucial to determine more fully in what ways do cultural differences impede the reading process and where within the context of reading it is best to incorporate the Afro-American social cultural frame of reference. Yet it will be equally crucial to discern the extent to which cultural differences per se impede reading achievement versus impediment emanating moreso from the attitudes of teachers toward culturally divergent predilections of pupils.

All in all, the time is long overdue for us to break with the orthodox and traditional approaches to dealing with a persisting, perplexing yet challenging dilemma. Hopefully the kinds of analyses and directions for research offered presently, will help to usher in a fresh understanding and marshall support for some viable alternative strategies for understanding and facilitating reading achievement for Afro-American children.

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